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A Facey

A NEW MICHAEL GILBERT

nd 12 brilliant stories

September

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Vol. XXV No. 9 **Cover by Jon Davis** **SEPTEMBER 1964**

Over Now to You	*Decoration by Graham*	**2**
Illusion?	**Alberto Moravia**	**4**
A Small Pinch of Weather	**Nicholas Dee** *Illustration by Shirley Hughes*	**9**
Corporal Valdes	**Geoffrey Household**	**19**
Flood Tide	**Leslie Gordon Barnard**	**27**
All My Eye!	*Decoration by Hannah Mekler*	**44**
In Broad Daylight	**Henry Cecil**	**47**
Shakespeare Award		**52**
First Night	**Moira Burgess** *Illustrations by Mary Dinsdale*	**54**
In the Sun	**Elizabeth Taylor**	**69**
Lake N'yanza	**Samuel Baker** *Illustration by M. Whittlesea*	**84**
A Moveable Feast	**Ernest Hemingway** *Decorations by Edith Maclean*	**96**
Sweete Themmes	*Decoration by Biro*	**102**
Manhood	**John Wain**	**105**
Varda, the Falcon	**Robert Murphy**	**115**
Men at Play	*Decoration by William Burnard*	**126**
Tate Haskell's Boat	**Frederick K. Randolph**	**129**
The Man Who Hated Banks *(First Part)*	**Michael Gilbert**	**134**
Leisure-Pleasure *Contributors: Jan Dehane, J. L. Delin, Keith Fletcher, John Baker White*		**160**
Ten Minute Crossword		**167**
Argosy Crossword		**168**

Acknowledgments are due for permission to reprint copyright material by the following authors: to Allen and Unwin for "Song of Courtship" from "Chinese Poems"; to Jonathan Cape for the Hemingway extract; to Collins for the extract by Neville Cardus; to Rupert Hart-Davis for the extract by Ivor Brown, to William Heinemann for the extracts from "Loved and Envied," and "Madame Solaria," for the poem by George Rostrevor Hamilton from "Collected Poems and Epigrams," and for Arthur Symons' poem; to Michael Joseph for the story from "Full Circle" © Henry Cecil 1948, and for the extract by Richard Condon; to Longmans, Green for the extract by David Storey; to Macdonald for the extract by Dorothy Mackinder; to Methuen for the extract from "1066 and All That," and for the extract by A. P. Herbert; to Penguin Books for R. M. Lucey's puzzle, and for lines by F. A. V. Madden; to The Clarendon Press for lines from the "Poetical Works of Robert Bridges"; to The Society of Authors for lines by Laurence Binyon

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OVER NOW TO YOU...

ALWAYS attracted by unfamiliar technical terms, we happened to dip recently into a work on Social Science—a subject which has hitherto been a total mystery to us—and found it contained some useful expressions which we can't think how we've managed without all these years.

Nipping past Absolutism, Antagonistic Co-operation—we know all about *that*—and Game Theory, we came to Generalised Other, which made us pause and wonder how the proof-readers of these books can ever be sure if a word is correct. What's to prove Generalised Other isn't a misprint for Generalised Otter? Or Generalised Mother—you know, one of those Russian decorations, " To Comrade General Katerina Petrovna, Heroic Mother of the Soviet Union "—or perhaps Generalised Bother, some kind of public nuisance to keep the affluent society from getting complacent? But no, the definition said that a Generalised Other is a rôle abstracted from the common elements of the attitudes of those with whom the individual interacts.

Personally, we shall go on cherishing our image of the Generalised Otter.

We turned to Indifference Curves, which you would think could be nothing but the Cold Shoulder of the barmaid serving five other customers at the far end of the saloon. Actually these curves derive from the assumption that consumers can distinguish and compare satisfactions arising from different goods.

We sometimes ask ourselves where social scientists can have been raised; they should just see the rise of our wife's Indifference Curve when we suggest that a weekend at Margate is just as good as a fortnight at Menton.

Elasticity, now. " The advantage of the Elasticity Concept compared with the slope concept df(x)dx is that the elasticity is

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independent of the units in which x and y are measured. This is useful for comparing the differing response, if any, to different commodities, e.g. tomatoes and automobiles."

Useful it may be, but this, to us, seemed bordering on sheer music-hall farce . . . "Hey, Maggie! I sent you out to buy a pound of tomatoes and you done come back wit' a Pontiac! Where's all yo' Elasticity Concept?"

"Why Momma, I done washed my Elasticity Concept an' hit's out in de sunshine dis minute, a-hangin' on de line!"

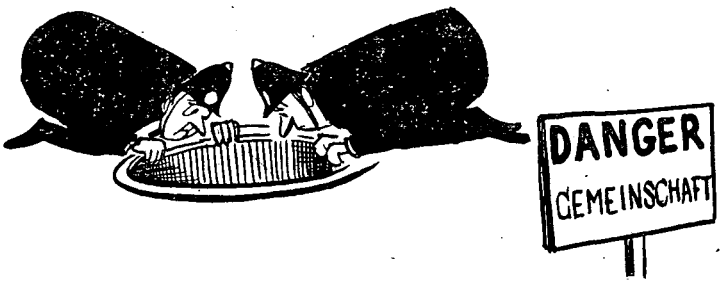
Next we were attracted to Gemeinschaft, which has a sonorous subterranean ring about it, but the definition didn't do us much good: it's an ideal-type concept referring to a type of social structure that doesn't exist. See also Social System, it said, so we flipped on and found that a social system involves a process of interaction between two or more actors. That's just plain silly: no actors of our acquaintance *ever* interact, or ever will; their Indifference Curves to each other amount to something pathological.

Substitution took our fancy; the marginal rate of Substitution of x for y is the quantity of y which would compensate the consumer for the loss of x; if I take away your copy of Argosy, for instance, how many boxes of boll weevils shall I have to give you before you are satisfied? The answer to that one is blowing in the wind, we reckon.

Nearing the end of the volume we came across the word Verwandtshaftsbezeichnungern and that really did for us; deciding that social science was not, and never would be, our cup of tea, we closed the book and turned gratefully to Argosy—garnished this month with the start of a splendid new Petrella adventure by Michael Gilbert, one of our favourite mystery-spinners.

In this new novel Inspector Petrella, now rising high in Scotland Yard, sets out on the track of— Hey! Watch it! Help! Police! Gilbert's gone and fallen down the Gemeinschaft . . .

The Back-room Boys



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It was the kind of bikini in fashion

ILLUSION?

BY ALBERTO MORAVIA

ERNESTO was standing, one day, in the doorway of the sitting-room in his own home, watching from a distance his wife and the man whom he suspected of being his wife's lover, a friend of his called Luca. They were sitting on a sofa at the far end of the room, and were talking animatedly but in low voices about something seemingly of great interest to them.

Ernesto was smoking furiously as he looked at them; for some time now jealousy had been keeping him awake at night and weighing him down with sleep in the daytime; and at that moment he could not have said which he would prefer—to go to sleep or to rid himself of the unconquerable anxiety which the thought of his wife aroused in him.

But in the end his fixed, persistent, malevolent stare seemed to annoy her. Suddenly she jumped up, walked across the room to him and asked, "Will you kindly tell me what it is that makes you stare at me like that?"

"No reason at all," replied Ernesto. "It's no crime to look at you; a cat may look at a king."

"Yes—but, unfortunately, I'm not a king. Luca wants to talk to me about his affairs. Go and wait for us in the study; we'll come and fetch you, and we'll all go to the beach." As she spoke, his wife pressed her hand lightly on his chest and pushed him out into the bedroom. The door closed.

Instead of going into the study, as had been so lovingly suggested to him, Ernesto, highly displeased, sat down in a corner of the bedroom and waited. But the second-hand of his watch, on which he kept his eyes fixed, had scarcely moved five times round its circuit before the door opened and his wife, in her petticoat, with bare arms and stockinged feet, appeared in the doorway, threw her dress on to a chair and vanished.

Obviously, she had not seen Ernesto crouching in his corner,

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but Ernesto had seen her only too well: the quick forward movement of her body in its transparent undergarment, the hurried gesture, the excited look on her face. And so he reflected, with a distress which was acute and at the same time bitterly triumphant, he now held the proof he had long been looking for; his wife and Luca loved each other; in fact they carried their effrontery so far as to shut themselves up together in his own house, right under his nose. What should he do?

Ernesto's first impulse was to burst into the sitting-room; but he restrained himself in time, for there suddenly flashed into his mind the revengeful notion of becoming in his turn the deceiver, after having himself been deceived. He would not burst in on them but would play cat and mouse. Hitherto he had been kept in the dark, and they had hoodwinked him; now he would hoodwink them and they would be ignorant of it.

In the meantime, in order to avoid making them suspicious, it would be wise for him to go into the study as his wife, with treacherous foresight, had suggested. Ernesto made as though to rise from the armchair into which he had sunk, and then, as he made the effort to do so, all of a sudden he awoke.

He was—yes, he was in the bedroom; but there was no dress lying on the chair. Just at that moment the door opened, and his wife, fully clothed this time, looked in and asked him if he was ready to go to the beach. So it was all a dream, thought Ernesto, as he followed her. Hitherto, in spite of his fatigue from sleeplessness, he had always managed to distinguish between sleeping and waking. Now, with a mingled feeling of alarm and astonishment, he became conscious that, without realising it, he had passed from a dream—which had some semblance of reality —to a reality which had the absurdity of a dream. These thoughts filled his mind as they went down into the street.

They got into the car. Ernesto placed himself at the wheel; his wife sat beside him and Luca behind.

Ernesto drove for some time without speaking. But as they turned into Via Cristoforo Colombo, he said, "Just imagine, I went to sleep while I was waiting for you, and I had a really ridiculous dream."

"What was that?"

"I dreamt that you were with Luca in the sitting-room and I was looking at you, and then you turned me out and shut the door in my face. After a little while you appeared, half undressed, in the doorway, threw down your dress on a chair, and went back and shut yourself up with Luca."

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He saw his wife give him a sideways look, and then start laughing and laughing until her pretty, fair face became scarlet.

Finally, she stammered, " But, my poor Ernesto . . ."

" Well, what's the matter? "

" My poor Ernesto, it wasn't a dream."

" What? Did you really throw me out of the room, were you really shut up with him, were you really half undressed? "

" Now, wait a moment, it was like this: Luca and I were talking and you irritated me, staring at me from the door in the way you often do—like a bull that's just going to charge. So I asked you to go out of the room for a moment. But they came to tell me that the dressmaker had arrived with the new dress for me to try on. So I asked Luca to leave the room too. After I had tried on the dress, which fitted me very well, I took it off and threw it on the chair in the bedroom, so that the maid could put it away. All this really happened. But at that point you fell asleep; and then, when you woke up, you thought it had been a dream."

" But when I woke up the dress was no longer on the chair."

" Of course not; you were asleep and you didn't realise that the maid had come in, put away the dress, and gone out again. She said to me, in fact, ' Signor Ernesto is asleep. Shall I wake him up? ' And I answered, ' No, please don't, because he didn't sleep last night.' "

" Thank you, for being so considerate."

" But what's the matter; are you angry with me? "

" No; if anything, I'm angry with myself."

After driving along the Castelfusano road between the dusty, tangled pinewood and the harshly sparkling sea, they came to the bathing-establishment and the carpark, with cars standing in a row all round it under the thatched shelters, their metalwork throwing out a blinding glare in the August sunshine.

They went in and walked over towards a hut; bathers were moving in a formation, and against a background, that seemed like that of a ballet—on one side the green huts, all exactly the same in a scalloped pattern against the blue sky, appearing to descend towards the sea; on the other, a procession of bathers, alternating according to sex, a man and a woman, a man and a woman, in single file, walking up the cement platform towards the way out. To accentuate the impression of a ballet, the big umbrellas on the beach against the backdrop of the sea, were all yellow; while the almost naked figures standing out against the horizon were chestnut-brown. A large beach-ball, black and green in

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segments, flew through the air, thrown back and forth by two players in red bathing-trunks. All this was secretly irritating to Ernesto. Just as, a little later, he was irritated at the sight of his wife when she came out of the hut in a bikini.

— It was, in fact, the most fantastically exiguous and symbolic bikini to be seen anywhere on the beach. Two-thirds of her shapely bosom transcended the limits of her brassière, which was reduced to the width of an ordinary ribbon; from her breast to her belly, the eye could travel over an expanse of bare, blonde flesh, soft, supple, undulating, inviting, down to a triangle of flower-patterned material so small that, if you looked at her sideways, it was hidden by the golden-brown curve of her legs and she appeared to be entirely naked. In truth, thought Ernesto, his wife—rather like the Emperor in Hans Andersen's tale—was more naked, so to speak, than when she was really naked, inasmuch as, though she was in effect naked, she thought quite honestly that she was clothed, and so had all the naturalness of someone who imagines he has nothing to be ashamed of. He said brusquely, " Now look, do please go and cover yourself a bit more; this is really too much."

" But this is the kind of bikini that's in fashion this year."

" Put a handkerchief over yourself; you're naked."

" Well, and what if I was? "

" Just you go into the hut and put something on."

" Ugh, how tiresome you are! " His wife turned, displaying to him, with unconscious irony, how naked she was when seen from behind also, and started off towards the door of the hut. Just at that moment Luca, who had been waiting until she was undressed, went in. But this did not prevent her from going in with him. The door closed and Ernesto found himself alone.

The sun on his back was scorching, his face was burning with rage. Once again his wife had shut herself up with Luca, and this time he could not possibly delude himself into thinking it a dream. What struck him most of all, as a particularly cruel feature of the matter, was that she should have shut herself up in the hut with Luca, making use of the pretext that he himself had provided—the scantiness of her bikini.

Ernesto could not help feeling that by now the two lovers had lost all restraint; the intrigue was clear and transparent and perfectly obvious. From inside the hut there now came a sound of shuffling feet, a suppressed murmur of voices. Then, after an interval which seemed to him immensely long, the door opened and Luca appeared on the threshold, with an air of quiet satisfaction, fastening the belt of his trunks. Without hesitation

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Ernesto bounded forward and seized hold of him by the neck, shouting, "That's enough, now." A confused scene followed. Luca and Ernesto, struggling together, finished up on the sand in a cloud of dust; some of the bathers separated them, panting and dishevelled; then Ernesto's wife ran up, dripping wet from the sea, and, taking them each by one arm, dragged them to the bar.

They sat down in a corner. Luca was disturbed but calm, with the look of a man wrongly suspected. Ernesto was grim and gloomy; his wife, as usual, could not manage to keep serious. Finally, after Ernesto had given an account of what had happened, she burst out laughing.

"There's nothing to laugh at," said Ernesto gloomily.

"I'm laughing," said his wife, "because this time there's no doubt—*the whole thing was a dream.*"

"What d'you mean?"

"I went first into the hut, and when I came out you'd gone to sleep in the wicker armchair on the platform. I went past in front of you and then on down to the sea, and you went on sleeping. Luca went into the hut, and you were still asleep. You dreamt therefore that you told me to wrap something round my hips, you dreamt that I shut myself up in the hut with Luca; naturally, after a dream like that, as soon as Luca woke you up by opening the door, you went for him."

"I'm sorry," said Ernesto thoughtfully; "first I mistook reality for a dream, and now I've mistaken a dream for reality. My nerves have gone all to pieces for some time now, and I don't seem to understand anything."

"But how," exclaimed his wife, "could you possibly think that I would shut myself up in the hut with Luca?"

"I thought so because this morning you really did shut yourself up with him in the sitting-room."

"Yes, but it was the sitting-room and I wasn't in a bathing-costume."

"You were in your petticoat."

"But when I was in my petticoat, Luca wasn't in the room."

"How was I to know that? It seemed to me so outrageous that I thought it must be a dream. Perhaps that was why, when the thing repeated itself in a dream, I believed it was true."

"Well, let's go and have a bathe. Are you coming with us?"

"You go on," said Ernesto sulkily; "I'll join you later."

Ernesto watched them as they walked away down the cement platform towards the sea. Someone at a table close by said loudly, "How happy they are together, those two! You can see they're in love."

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"Rain if you please. And make haste."

A SMALL PINCH OF WEATHER

BY NICHOLAS DEE

PETRONILLA'S Guest House, where the Bishop stayed, was next door to a little shop with small and unimpressive windows containing a mixed-up tangle of things which nobody ever looked at, because they always walked straight into the shop and told Miss Harriet Ross what they wanted; and she always had it, whether it was four ounces of three-ply for a jersey or half a mile of mare's-tail for Tuesday.

The previous woolmonger before Miss Harriet had been an old lady who had called the shop *JOY*. The signboard read like this: *Wools and JOY Embroidery*, with the *JOY* in bigger letters to show it was intended to be read first. Of course nobody ever did. They called the shop, Wools and Joy.

When the old lady died, Harriet's father gave her the shop for a twenty-first birthday present, and suggested she should change the name to Wools and Harriet, but she preferred to call it *Wools and WEATHER Embroidery*, and had the sign changed accordingly. Strathcloud, where the Ross family lived, still employed an official Weather Witch. The post was hereditary. So, at twenty-one, Harriet had automatically become Weather Operator for the Strathcloud Urban District Council at a salary of four pounds a year, a bushel of sunflower seeds, and free upkeep of her bicycle.

Her duties were simple: she had to provide suitable weather for any town occasion, such as bonfire night, or the ceremonial ducking of the Provost which took place on the first of April. And, when these fixtures were dealt with, she was free to make weather bookings for any private citizens who wanted them, provided they did not conflict.

"Half an hour's rain for your carrots, Mr. McCrae, Tuesday morning? I'm afraid half-past eleven to twelve is booked sunny

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for Mrs. Lowrie—Janet Lowrie's wedding, you know; would twelve to half-past suit? Fine rain, or medium fine? And do you want any wind with it?"

There was no charge for the weather itself, but the sixpenny booking-fee went towards municipal expenses.

When the Bishop of Mbutambuta retired from Africa and came to live in Strathcloud, he stayed at Petronilla's Guest House. On his first day exploring the town he was attracted by the *Wools and WEATHER Embroidery* notice. He wandered into the shop and stared round at the crochet hooks, dangling skeins of wool, needle-measures, rain-gauges, and wind-scales.

"Guid morning," said Miss Harriet, "what can I do for you?"

It was impossible to tell Miss Harriet's age. She had not changed since she took office at twenty-one. She was small, her face was nut-shaped and nut-brown, her hair was mousy, and her eyes were grey. There was something a little vague and misty about her but she had a nice smile.

"Oh, I'd like a hem-stitched sunset, please," said the Bishop absently, looking at Miss Harriet, "and a pound of three-ply hail."

The Bishop and Miss Harriet became good friends for a short time. The Bishop had been acquainted with rainmaking witch-doctors in Mbutambuta and was interested to find the old custom kept up in Scotland.

"Where does your weather end?" he asked. "Does it extend to Farquhidder?"

"Oh, no, that would never do!" said Miss Harriet, shocked. "The weather stops at the parish boundary, of course. Sometimes in a drought we get people standing there with buckets and hoses trying to siphon off our rain."

"Why don't they make their own rain?"

"Och well, they've never had a Weather Witch in Farquhidder."

Miss Harriet was very fond of every kind of weather. When her duties permitted, she liked to go out in the rain or the mist or the sun, riding her bicycle over the moors and watching the clouds whirl across the sky or the raindrops slide off the end of her handlebars. The Bishop was a great walker, and sometimes she would see him, always equipped with his umbrella, striding up the local mountain or down one of its glens.

But alas, Miss Harriet had very little spare time. That was one of the penalties of the job: she had always to be within reach or near at hand in case of emergency calls on her services.

The trouble between Miss Harriet and the Bishop was due to Harriet's sunshine-coloured cat, Tomintoul.

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The Bishop slept up on the top storey of Petronilla's Guest House, in a large spacious room with a picture-window and a skylight.

Recently, Tomintoul had taken to roaming at night. Perhaps he found Miss Harriet's diet insufficient for his large frame—she lived mostly on fried eggs, done sunny-side up, Apple Snow, and Sunshine Cake with Ice-Cream Frosting. Whether Tomintoul hoped for better things at the Guest House, or whether he had personal affairs farther afield, who can say? At all events he went out several times a week, and the route he took was over

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the roof and through the room occupied by the Bishop, who was quite unused to having a large, dew-spangled cat descend on him heavily in the middle of the night. The first time it happened he thought Tomintoul was a python—they had been the chief nuisance in Mbutambuta—and leapt yelling across the room. The second time he didn't wake up, but as Tomintoul, finding the door shut, spread his large form across more and more of the bed, the Bishop began to suffer from strange dreams. He thought he was being hugged by bears, run over by steam-rollers, drowned in a river full of crocodiles. Next morning found Tomintoul placidly washing in the middle of the bed while its rightful owner dangled in a fold of blanket at one side.

The Bishop felt he was being treated with lack of respect, and complained to Miss Dalziel who ran the Guest House.

"Och awa', could ye not keep the skylight shut?" she suggested.

"That is out of the question," said the Bishop firmly. "It was in order to benefit from the crisp, healthy air that I came to Scotland. If this persecution continues I doubt if it will be possible for me to make a prolonged stay at your otherwise delightful Guest House, where I had hoped to spend my declining days."

"Well, noo, we could find you anither room."

"But I like the outlook from this one. All that is needful is that the cat be shut in at night."

But when Miss Harriet heard this suggestion she exclaimed, "Shut in Tomintoul? Impossible! Besides, I need to study the condition of his fur in the morning. It tells me a lot about the weather."

Unfortunately Tomintoul's wanderings became more and more frequent. Next night he arrived on the Bishop at two a.m. with a large mouse, alighting so heavily that the Bishop, who was dreaming that he was aboard the *Titanic*, shouted, "Abandon ship! Man the lifeboats!"

No bishop likes to feel ridiculous. Next morning he determined to curse Tomintoul with bell, book and candle. As it happened, however, the ship on which he had travelled from Africa had been overrun by mice, and his stock of cursing candles had been consumed at lively mouse-parties. The Bishop entered MacGregor's Stores at nine o'clock next morning and asked for a pound of their largest candles.

"I'm afraid we're clean out of candles," said Miss Maggie MacGregor. "Can I sell you a nice wee electric torch, now?"

"Oh, leave it, leave it," the Bishop said wearily. In mitigation

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of his irritability it must be remembered that he was low on sleep.

Miss Harriet was dreamily stacking pink, blue, and green wools into a rainbow-coloured pyramid and gazing at the weather outside—a nice drizzle, lightly touched with sleet—when the Bishop stormed in.

"This must stop!" he said accusingly.

"Only another ten minutes," said Miss Harriet kindly, "and then we're due for a rainbow to coincide with the children's break. Don't you like rain? Can I sell you some wool? Many retired clerical gentlemen take to knitting." And before he knew where he was the Bishop had bought eighteen ounces of fishermen's-knit and two immense wooden needles.

He took the bus to Farquhidder to buy a catapult, a quantity of netting, a potato pistol and a fire extinguisher. After he had made these purchases he dropped into a café for a cup of tea, and there chanced to overhear a very odd conversation.

"Going to the races, Thursday?" a weasely-looking little man was saying to another, who was rather like a tall guinea-pig, hairless, with pink eyes.

"Why, got any good tips?"

"I've one *very* good tip." Weasel leaned closer and looked sharply about. "You remember MacPhair's Marsh Marigold? The mare that only runs well when the going's sticky?"

"I thought he'd given up running her."

"Man, he's had a stroke of genius. Ye ken Strathcloud, where they have the lass that sees to the weather?"

"He's never going to—"

"Hush, man! Listen to this!" Weasel leaned closer and the Bishop heard the words, "rowan . . . soon settle her." He thought to himself that if Marsh Marigold's winning the race depended on someone trying to bribe Miss Harriet, then the horse's backers were out of luck. For though he would gladly have transported her and her cat to the farthest Antipodes, the Bishop was quite sure Miss Harriet would never be party to such a plan.

When Tomintoul came to call on the Bishop very early next morning he received a rude shock. Jumping down through the skylight he found himself entangled in innumerable folds of strawberry-netting. The Bishop bombarded him with potato pellets and even threatened to spray him with detergent foam. Tomintoul was affronted.

"And you can stay there till after breakfast to teach you the sanctity of the British home," the Bishop said crossly, and went

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down to his porridge, leaving Tomintoul in a sadly ruffled condition, sniffing the heartbreaking fragrance of kippers that wafted up the stairs.

After breakfast the Bishop went for a short stroll, according to custom. But the weather was inclement—in fact it was raining cats and dogs—and he soon turned homewards. As he neared the Guest House he noticed an anxious crowd gathered outside the wool shop next door. Miss Dalziel was there, and Mr. McCrae, and Mrs. Lowrie, and Miss Maggie MacGregor, and a great many other people, some inside the shop and some on the step, all looking worried and distressed.

"Oh, Bishop dear," Miss Dalziel burst out as soon as he came within earshot, "you'll not have seen Miss Harriet the morn? It's not like her to leave the shop, but no one's laid eyes on her since eight o'clock!"

"No, I haven't seen her," said the Bishop. Then he remembered Tomintoul, still incarcerated upstairs. Would the cat's imprisonment have anything to do with Miss Harriet's absence? Hurriedly excusing himself, he went up to his bedroom where Tomintoul, making the best of a bad job, had curled up and gone to sleep.

"Wake up," said the Bishop. "Your mistress is missing."

He loosed Tomintoul from the nets and took him down to the shop. By this time the police had arrived and were searching for clues, but not finding any.

"We'll need to be telling the Provost of this," said Inspector Trootie. "But he's awa' doon to the races all day today."

The races! Only then did the Bishop remember the ominous conversation he had overheard in the café at Farquhidder. He told Inspector Trootie about it.

"Man! Then it's as plain as can be! Yon miscreants will have kidnapped her and be forcing her to make a bit of rain for them."

"Och maircy, the puir lassie," lamented Miss Dalziel. "Whitever shall we do for weather without her? Saints presairve us, it'll never stop raining."

But just at that moment the rain did stop in a sudden and most decisive manner. The sun came out and shone as if it intended to go on shining all night.

"Good for the lassie, she's defying the scoondrels!" exclaimed Inspector Trootie. "I wonder, noo, where they'll have taken her? We'll be needing dogs to follow the scent, and the mischance of it is they're all in Hyde Park, taking part in the sheepdog trials."

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"Could we no put Tomintoul on the trail?" suggested Miss Dalziel.

"Ah, it's easy tae see ye've had a hand in the administrative side of things, ma'am," said Inspector Trootie admiringly.

Tomintoul had vanished again. After some searching he was discovered back in Petronilla's Guest House, availing himself of the kipper-skins. He was brought back, licking his whiskers, and put on to the scent at the wool-shop door, though, as the Inspector observed, "If he can deduce onything through yon reek of kipper he's better than a marvel."

The weather was behaving very oddly. In a series of short spells they had fog, sleet, snow, wind that shot up from gale force seven to eleven and then back to six, rainbows, snowbows, blistering sun, and a very muddling series of mirages due to the constant variation in air temperature.

"I doot they're subjecting her to pressure," said Inspector Trootie unhappily.

Tomintoul was a very slow tracker. He kept sitting down to wash, and this was maddening for the pursuers.

The Bishop couldn't bear the pace. He had been used to striding through the bush at a smart four miles an hour, and he soon decided to strike off on his own. Besides, he hadn't much faith in Tomintoul's judgment; he had another idea.

He climbed the side of Glasdeir, the local mountain, until he reached the foot of a lonely glen with a single rowan tree in it.

Meanwhile, Tomintoul had dismayed the trackers by returning to Petronilla's Guest House and asking in an emphatic manner for more kipper-skins. The Inspector thought it would be best if his request was granted, so they all stood round impatiently while he ate two or three. Then he picked up one very large skin and carried it slowly through the village.

"And whut do ye suppose will be the purpose of that?" said Inspector Trootie.

"Hoots, man, can ye not see the guid-hearted cattie is taking a wee bit fush to his mistress in distress?"

"We shan't reach her till Hogmanay at this rate," the Inspector said gloomily. "Do ye suppose Tomintoul would let me carry the fush?"

But Tomintoul scorned this self-sacrificing idea, and went on sit-down strike, spitting fiercely every time the Inspector tried to approach him. Matters had to be left as they were. The procession wound at a snail's pace down to the bridge over the Hirple Burn and up the hill on the other side towards Mudie's Barn.

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At about this time the Bishop, approaching his rowan tree along the twisting glen, heard a series of angry shouts and a faint cry for help. Nodding grimly to himself, he rounded the last corner of rock and beheld a strange scene. Four or five louts—if he had been Inspector Trootie he would have known they were the Wild Wee Lads, alias the Ardnafechtan Gang—including the weasely man from the café, had the poor little Weather Witch tied up in the high fork of the rowan tree, where she looked most uncomfortable. Two of them carried axes and a couple more were piling dried bracken and whin round the bole of the tree.

"Now for the last and lucky time, lass, will you obleege us with a bit rain?" snarled Hughie Hogg, the weasely man. "We'd hate to cause you unnecessary suffering, but it's airgently needful for oor plans that the groond should be soaked by three o'clock. If ye will not grant this reasonable request we'll be forced to chop half through the tree and set fire to it."

"I can't let you have any rain," Miss Harriet answered resolutely. "In the first place you are not Strathcloud ratepayers, and in the second this afternoon's booked fine to dry the Strathcloud Wanderers' football-wash."

"Give her a taste of smoke, Donald," said Hughie. "If we warm her up enough she'll likely make a bit of rain to dowse the fire."

Donald lit a patch of furze and the smoke puffed up into Miss Harriet's face. At the same moment Hughie swung his axe with an ominous clunk against the tree. But the sky remained obstinately blue and cloudless, the sun shone indefatigably.

"You'll have terrible bad luck if you chop a rowan tree," the Weather Witch said faintly. Then her head drooped sideways and she slipped down in the cords that held her. It was plain that she was unconscious.

"She'll come to soon enough when the fire burns up under her toes," said Donald callously.

"Get her down at once, you abominable blackguards!" snapped the Bishop, waving his umbrella. The gang spun round in amazement. In their absorption they had not noticed him coming. But when they realised they had only an elderly clerical gentleman to deal with, they relaxed, and began to close in on him menacingly.

"Ye'll be sorry you came up here, Daddy-O," said Hughie.

The Bishop stood his ground.

"Are you going to get that lady down or not?"

"Are ye oot of your mind, man? After all the trouble we've taken to put her there?"

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"Then I shall be obliged to shout," said the Bishop, putting his hands over his ears.

"Shout and be dommed to ye. There's no one nearer than Strathcloud," said Donald, who had run up and reconnoitred from the shoulder of the glen.

The Bishop's shout was a most unusual sound. It had an electrifying effect on the gang. Without a single exception they dropped to the ground as if they had been pole-axed, and lay motionless.

"Miss Harriet!" called the Bishop. "Are you all right?" But it was plain that she was still unconscious, and unfortunately the pile of dried furze beneath her was now blazing merrily.

The Bishop took out of his pocket a neatly-woven grass string, from which dangled a small cluster of bones. He addressed these in a stern, commanding voice. "Rain, if you please. And make haste." Grey clouds came scurrying across the sky like poultry running to be fed, and unloosed their contents in a torrential downpour directly over the spot where the Bishop stood. He hastily opened his umbrella.

In less than no time the bonfire was quenched and the Bishop was able to climb the rowan and rescue Miss Harriet who was recovering under the reviving effect of a nice drop of rain.

"Oh," she sighed, "how delicious!" Then rousing a little more she remembered the situation and exclaimed, "Oh, but this will never do! There was no rain scheduled for this afternoon. What about the football-wash?"

"Don't be alarmed," said the Bishop, "this storm is extremely local." He took off his hat and addressed the teeming heavens. "You may now stop. Thank you. I am extremely obliged to you."

"Good gracious," said Miss Harriet weakly, "who taught you to do that?"

"Oh, I learnt it from a witch-doctor in Mbutambuta," the Bishop said modestly.

"But how did you dispose of the gang?"

"I used a battle shout which was taught me by the same man. It is most efficacious—in fact it has a literally stunning effect. N'Doko was able to kill people with it, but luckily I am not so proficient. However, those men should stay unconscious long enough for the police to get here."

With no more ado, he firmly picked up Miss Harriet and carried her carefully down the glen . . .

Where, meanwhile, were the police? With the rest of the people of Strathcloud they were in Mudie's Barn, indignantly

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surveying the object of Tomintoul's pilgrimage—a lissom black mother cat and four fine kittens. Tomintoul, intensely proud at all this public notice, gave his wife the kipper-skin and set about washing his children.

"The auld wretch! He desairves to be jailed for contempt—leading us a wild-goose-chase like this!" cried Miss Dalziel.

Inspector Trootie was more philosophical. "Aweeel, aweel, hoo was he tae ken whit we were seeking? We'll juist have ti gae on sairching for the puir wee leddy."

"But where?" wailed Miss Maggie MacGregor. Her question was soon answered, for they met the Bishop and Miss Harriet by the bridge.

The Bishop never told the police how he had managed to subdue the Ardnafechtan Gang, and they themselves had no theories about it. But the gang never tried to interfere with the Weather Witch of Strathcloud again.

From that day the Bishop and Miss Harriet were firm friends. Tomintoul's family were brought down to the wool shop—where they wrought terrible havoc, but nobody minded.

In due course one of the kittens went to live with the Bishop, who christened it Kattegat, and it is an interesting fact that, although Kattegat slept on the Bishop's bed, taking up more and more room as he grew larger and larger, the Bishop never again threatened to leave Petronilla's Guest House. Indeed he soon fell into the habit of giving Miss Harriet a hand with the weather, if she was ever a bit under it, or wanted a day off.

The Bishop never achieved Harriet's lightness of touch with the elements though; and when the sun shone hot enough to fry an egg, or the wind shot up to Beaufort Scale Twelve, or the hailstones were as large as Seville oranges, the good people of Strathcloud would shake their heads and remark, "Ah, to be sure, yon's a touch o' Bishop's Weather." © Nicholas Dee 1964

BIRTHDAY SUIT

Mr. Ben Richards, of Resolven, Glamorgan, put up a notice in the window of his grocer's shop yesterday, as a joke. It said: *Free groceries for the first lady customer who comes in in a topless dress.* Mr. Richards expected no takers in the village, but when the shop was crowded with customers, in walked the local chemist's daughter, Miss Catherine Jones, bare from the waist up and carrying a shopping basket and a list of groceries. Mr. Richards had to keep his promise, and Miss Jones celebrated her third birthday.

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Was he officially alive or not?

CORPORAL VALDES

BY GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

THE only murderer I ever knew was a personal friend. Yet I admit that his sentence was just, legal and merited.

Even the Military Police were kind to Valdes. They assured him that it did not hurt at all to be executed by a firing squad. Valdes politely agreed with them—not that he cared about pain. He was as used to that as a retired boxer, and looked a little like one, too. He wanted to live as eagerly as the rest of us, but he realised that his death, like any other military ceremony, had to be performed with dignity. He was a soldier all through.

He was an Andalusian, sturdy, of middle height and with the type of face which the Spaniards call cháto—looking as if it had been flattened out by a road roller and come up smiling. It must be common in the Peninsula. I had three other toughs with much the same lack of features.

Valdes had fought right through the Spanish Civil War and been interned in France at the end of it. In 1940 some of those internees were evacuated before the Germans could grab them, and formed into a Spanish commando. A good idea on paper. What they didn't know about bloodshed wasn't worth knowing. And yet their commando was unusable. Too fierce, too desperate. They hadn't the flair of the British for discreet, deadly action. When the Spanish commando was disbanded, Valdes, with a few of his mates, was posted to the Pioneer Corps.

What an outfit that was! We had plain labourers recruited from Africa or obscure islands in the Indian Ocean, the able-bodied poor of every colour in need of work and regular rations, and always some Q men, as they were called—habitual army criminals who had learnt by experience and cunning to anticipate the psychiatrist's next move and to get themselves registered as psychopaths.

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My own company was a mixture of Arabs, Q men, and vaguely oriental beachcombers. Corporal Valdes and his section of Spaniards formed a solid island of sanity and hard work.

In 1944 the company was with the Eighth Army in Italy, cleaning up close behind the advance. My main trouble was Italian hospitality. The men were not accustomed to red wine in that quantity. Valdes and his Spaniards, who were, acted off duty as nursemaids in the cafés, and the cases of rape and murder those fellows prevented was astonishing. They were proud of the reputation of the British Army. For them there was no other army in the war at all—and when they joined up, there wasn't.

" My Captain," Valdes said to me one night, " we cannot all be in the Guards. But we wish to assure you that we know how to die with decency."

They were going out beyond the front line, with a Field Company of sappers, to fill up craters in a mountain track which was going to be badly needed next day. It was late in the evening when they volunteered for the job, and they were all, I suppose, at the third litre; but there was no telling where the generosity of wine ended and Andalusian pride began.

Pride. Perhaps murder is never very far from it. There didn't seem room for either when I sent Valdes and his section down to the railhead to collect a consignment of picks and shovels. Only picks and shovels—but to Valdes they were Toledo steel. I had seen him use them under shell fire with such nonchalance that even the Q men didn't find an excuse to run back to safety.

That hardware was important to my Spaniards. So important that when a young French sergeant told them to get the hell out of the way, and let him load his truck with war-like stores, they ignored him.

Unfortunately Valdes, after two years of internment, spoke French. Unfortunately, too, he had that unreasonable Spanish contempt for the neighbour across the northern frontier. He told the French sergeant to pipe down and wait his turn.

The sergeant replied that he was not going to wait for any non-combatant bastards who were not fit to shovel— well, you can imagine the number of uses that an angry and imaginative Frenchman could find for a shovel. Valdes did not lose his temper. He rose with dignity to the occasion and developed his favourite creed: that if there were no shovels the luckier men who had fighting to do would never get near enough to the front line to do it. The Frenchman—so much we had in evidence—remarked that all the British Army ever did was shovelling, while their allies did the fighting.

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Corporal Valdes quietly picked up a rifle belonging to the French detachment, and shot the sergeant dead.

It was astonishing how correct and soldierly Valdes' movements then were.

The only authority handy was the railway transport officer. While the startled Frenchmen were busy with their sergeant, Valdes marched up to the R.T.O., saluted smartly, gave his name and unit, handed over the rifle and reported the incident. The R.T.O. wiped the sweat off his elderly brow—he had been naturally disconcerted by the approach of a murderer with a loaded rifle—and sent for the Military Police. The section, still an island of proud discipline, returned to camp.

There was nothing I could do. If it had been a British soldier he had shot, I think I might have got the court martial sentence reviewed. But he had shot an ally, and allies were touchy. It was more essential for the war effort that Valdes should die than that the French should suffer a sense of grievance.

He admitted as much himself. He did not regret the murder at all; he only regretted that it had been unavoidable. He pointed out that he had paid no attention to personal insults, but that an insult to the British Army was not to be borne. For three years, he said, we had treated him as a friend and a gentleman. The least he could do in return was to protect our honour.

I was determined that Valdes should not be executed. Somehow I, a mere captain, reached the French G.O.C. I speak reasonable French—that, and a bit of Arabic, and the remains of several tropical diseases were my qualifications for the Pioneer Corps—and I nearly won him over. I insisted that there was no need to prove Valdes mad; to shoot an unknown and gallant Frenchman he must be mad.

The general was exquisitely courteous. He knew that these were mere empty words, but they pleased him. Speaking for himself, he said at last, Valdes could be reprieved. But for the sake of the suffering mothers of France and the damned politicians—he dared to couple the two together with the irony of a man who was absolutely sure of himself—he regretted that he could not interfere. I came to a dead end against French obstinacy.

I tried the Corps psychiatrist—with whom, thanks to the curiosities among my Q men, I was on excellent terms. He told me that Valdes had the only faultlessly healthy human mind he had met in years, and that if hard scientific lying could help him, helped he would be.

He did his dishonest best, but the big shots above him refused

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to play. About ten per cent of my company had deserved a firing squad at some time, and they were tired of finding excuses for their behaviour. They refused to distinguish between Q men and emotionally primitive Spaniards.

I had no military ambition. I was just a grey-haired captain, fit enough only for the Pioneer Corps. So my plans for saving Valdes were quite uninhibited. I seriously considered every trick one reads of in fiction—down to supplying the firing squad with blanks and bribing them to say nothing. But not a single one of my ideas was practicable.

Valdes' section was equally desperate. They took it for granted that I was on their side. They had no more logic than women, and were just as right. Their experience of impossible escapes in the chaos of civil war was to the point, but such plans in a more formal army were unworkable.

Private Moreno, who was some sort of relation of Valdes from the days when they had possessed homes and wives, wanted to get inside the gaol and substitute himself for the condemned man. He couldn't very well be shot instead—and a court martial was unlikely to give him more than a year.

I thought about it night after night. I even trained Moreno to imitate Valdes' voice and accent. But he was a good inch too tall; and, though he did have a similar type of squashed and wrinkled features in the same tint of deep tan, common sense insisted that one could never be mistaken for the other unless they were heavily made up or bandaged, and then only in a crowd of Arabs or Englishmen.

Valdes was in the jug at Bari. I used to drive down and see him whenever I had a spare moment and could invent a reasonable excuse. On what would have to be my last visit, two days before he was due to be executed, I ran into the Corps psychiatrist, who was being let out through the formidable gate as I was being let in.

"Another of your beauties," he said to me.

"Who is it this time?"

"Pidgegood. There's nothing wrong with him whatever, except that he knows as much of our routine as I do. You can have him back when he's served his sentence."

Myself, I knew all along that there was not a trace of maladjustment in Pidgegood; he had merely been born without a sense of shame. But it had taken a long time for over-conscientious psychiatrists to realise that gaol was the proper place for him. He was a gipsy—or said he was. He had found in peace time that wild eyes and dirt and a general air of rural eccentricity

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always intimidated housewives and farmers, and he trusted that the military were just as easy.

They were. Pidgegood couldn't read or write, but he had the cunning of the devil. By the time he had been dismissed from his battalion as an incorrigible and cowardly rogue, he knew enough psychiatry to fool any solemn doctor. He put on an act just sufficiently unbalanced to ensure that his crimes would land him in a mental ward rather than a cell, but not enough to get him invalided out of the service. He preferred the army—what little he saw of it—to being drafted into a factory. Courts martial had no effect on him; he always came back to me with a careful letter of advice from the psychiatrists. But my chaps found a use for the man. If there were any inquiries about missing pigs or chickens and no chance of the company's innocence being believed, they always put the blame on Pidgegood. He was perfectly willing to accept it, even on the rare occasions when he wasn't guilty, and was rewarded by privileged idleness.

I was far from fond of him, but he was a part of my company and we were used to him, so I asked to be escorted to his cell. I went there before I went to Valdes. It was going to be the last time I should see my Corporal, and I knew I should want to be alone afterwards.

Pidgegood would talk of nothing else but Valdes. He reproached me to my face with not getting him off. There wasn't a man in the company, he said, whatever his colour, who wouldn't have died for Valdes, except me. I didn't attempt to explain. Pidgegood never understood the army machine.

"Have you seen him?" I asked.

"Gawd, yes! We runs round the yard together."

They did not have a condemned cell, you see. Firing squads were hardly ever used in the humane army of the last war. I suppose the proper procedure for dealing with Valdes was laid down, but it was not a matter of everyday experience and nobody wanted to be too formal.

And then, corrupted by the mere presence and criminality of Pidgegood, I suddenly saw a remote chance.

"Do you want to go back to the psychiatric ward?" I asked him.

"They won't 'ave nothing more to do with me," he said.

"Ever tried attempted murder?"

"Not worth it. Touch one of them warders, and they'll 'arf kill you and swear it was done resisting constraint."

"It wasn't one of them I meant," I explained.

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He got it. He got it instantly. His gipsy mind took him right to the point before I had done more than feel for it myself.

" I couldn't do 'im any 'arm with my bare 'ands," he said, " before they'd separate us."

We were alone in the cell. The warder was outside, but he didn't bother to supervise interviews between a prisoner and his long-suffering commanding officer.

I took a handkerchief from the pocket of my battledress trousers and blew my nose, looking away from Pidgegood. When I had replaced the handkerchief and done up the button, I noticed that the familiar lump against my thigh—my formidable pocket knife—had disappeared. I swear I felt nothing. It only occurred to me later that the unaccountable loss of several of my treasured possessions had always taken place when that scoundrel was with the company.

" The face, if possible, Pidgegood," I said, getting ready to go. "And if there is anything I can do for you at any time, you know I will."

" Thank you, sir. But I reckon I won't be coming back to the company this time."

Then I went on to see Valdes. There was a sergeant of Military Police present throughout the interview, and I couldn't drop a hint of what was brewing. When I left the cell I returned Valdes' salute with the tears running down my face. I was sure I would never see him again. Pidgegood seemed a frail ally against the imposing formality of military justice.

Not till the morning when Valdes, we all assumed, had been executed did I hear what had happened. The Spaniards of his section came babbling into the orderly room all at once, and for the first time in their lives had to be reminded by a roaring and indignant sergeant-major that they were soldiers.

Did I know the news from Bari? No, I didn't. Valdes had been attacked in the exercise yard by Pidgegood, and carved up with two strokes of a knife. The first had slit him from mouth to ear and taken the ear three-quarters off; the second had ripped open the artery of his left arm. Did I know that it was not the custom to execute a hospital patient? Did I know that he must be nursed back to health before he could be shot?

I showed as much pleasure as could be expected from an unemotional company commander, and asked how Pidgegood had come by a knife.

That did not seem to bother anybody. Pidgegood could not be imagined without a knife.

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Through the correct channels I asked whether it was permissible to visit Valdes in hospital, not being quite sure whether he was officially dead or not. Nothing against it. He was very glad to see me. His head was swathed in bandages, and the pale oak colour of his face had changed to yellow. He could not understand what had come over Pidgegood. He assumed that the doctors must have been right about him after all.

Military justice was now following all the rules of the game. Valdes had a guard continually at his bedside—or at least playing cards not more than three beds away. He was not even allowed to attend to the needs of nature alone, though his escort remained outside the swing door. I took a fatherly interest in all these arrangements. I also took note of the exact measurements and windings of his bandages.

I gave liberal leave to the Spaniards of his section—with the exception of Moreno. The hospital doorkeepers became accustomed to their cheerful arrivals and chattering departures. Valdes soon looked his normal self and colour. The surgeons, knowing what was in store for him when they released him, kept him as long as they mercifully could, and even wasted time in removing the scar of Pidgegood's knife—or mine, rather—by the latest plastic operation. But at last the week arrived when he had to be passed fit for execution.

I allowed four of the section to take a company truck and pay a good-bye visit. I met the truck on the road and put Moreno in the back of it, holding a saint of painted wood on a rather large base representing a rock. Inside the base was a cap made of bandages on the thinnest possible mould of plaster of Paris. It needed only one more wind and a safety pin to be an exact replica of Valdes' bandage. Parcels brought by visitors were examined at the door, so we had to use this subterfuge. We felt sure the saint would not object to taking part in an errand of mercy.

Beyond providing the party with very precise operation orders which I made them learn by heart, I had nothing else to do with the proposed felony. Whatever happened I knew they would never give me away, or even refer to the matter again.

At 14.15 hours the detachment passed the lavatories on Valdes' floor. Moreno whipped the cap out of its hiding-place and entered the third lavatory. The rest went straight on to Valdes' ward and presented him with the saint.

At 14.18 hours Valdes, accompanied by his guard, also entered the third lavatory, sidling in and not opening the door too wide. It was a stable door, but so long as they kept their

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heads down they could not be seen. We simply had to trust that the guard would not look under the door and see four feet instead of two.

Valdes put on Moreno's battledress, and shoved his bandages in the pocket. Moreno put on the cap, and Valdes' pyjamas. Groaning a little and holding his tummy to disguise his height, he trotted back to bed and dived under the bedclothes. His four visitors made a little doleful conversation and said an emotional good-bye. Then they picked up Valdes and drove like hell for our camp, passing close behind the French sector of the front where they dropped their Corporal.

I wasn't sure that I had not been too impudently ingenious there. But the plan worked. After all, the last place anyone would look for Valdes was among the French.

He changed into ragged civilian clothes—also provided in the truck—and spent the night crawling through the French forward positions until he was sure that only enemy patrols were ahead of him. Next morning, pretending to have escaped from a German labour battalion, he came in. The French believed him, or said they did. Six hours later Valdes had enlisted in the Foreign Legion.

Moreno had a much better run for his money than we ever thought he could. He kept up the deception till dawn of the following day, and very gladly accepted what I had prophesied—two years reduced to one when the sentence came up for revision. The others swore that they had never known that the man in bed was not Valdes, and the prosecution just failed to prove beyond a doubt that they did.

Pidgegood enjoyed a happy and idle war in the mental home. As for me, the worst I had to bear was an interview with my colonel, who told me privately that I was strongly suspected of knowing more about the escape of Valdes than I had stated in evidence. He had sworn to my character and assured the military detectives that their suspicions were impossible.

"It's an immoral trade, command," he said, looking me straight in the eye. "One becomes far too fond of one's subordinates."

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SOLUTION TO TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD (PAGE 167)

ACROSS. 1, Rigmarole. 6, Nun. 8, Cobalt. 9, Heart. 10, Chaste. 11, Saddler. 13, Repress. 16, Chapel. 18, Alibi. 19, Infamy. 21, Hun. 22, Traveller.

DOWN. 1, Rio. 2, Glass. 3, Actress. 4, Orchid. 5, Entail. 7, Naturally. 8, Cockroach. 12, Ascribe. 14, Pliant. 15, Enigma. 17, Awful. 20, Mar.

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You'll not get me—and you'll not get her

FLOOD TIDE

BY LESLIE GORDON BARNARD

WE travelled on the same train, and found ourselves sharing a claptrap conveyance over the ankle-deep sand road that led to the sea. When he learnt that I was heading for Captain Dalbro's, he laughed, pulled a newspaper cutting from his pocket, and read:

> Clean and comfortable accommodation for one or two single gentlemen, overlooking the sea. Good home cooking. Excellent material locally for artists and writers. Apply Captain Thomas Dalbro.

He stuffed the cutting back in his pocket, and removed his pipe from between his firm, white teeth.

"Which are you?" he grinned.

"A writer of sorts," I told him.

"Then I must be the artist," he said. "I'm glad of the confirmation. Even the chappies who daub in some magenta blobs for rocks and stand up a few sticks of burnt trees against a salmon-pink sky can't quite see my stuff. Don't blame 'em altogether, but I thought that after a month of browsing in pastures new I might be found worthy to be hung in the autumn exhibition. Not that I give two crooked pennies for the alleged honour, but I have a fancy to buck the game. Hullo, we must be getting there! Smell the sea and the rocks? Gad, that's good! Some viking strain in me, and all that, eh?"

We curved down a precipitous bit of road, and seemed literally to be thrown into the midst of a group of men and a few women, lounging in front of the post office and general store, to which our driver also brought a bag of mail.

Our personalities seemed to be of interest, but our immediate needs were a matter of indifference.

"Dalbro's?" said one old fellow. "Why, sure—up top o' the cliff there." He jerked his pipe vaguely.

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"How do we get there?"

"Dunno—climb, I suppose, like the rest of us."

The crowd chose to be amused.

"Here's Nance Shannon coming," drawled a young fellow. "She's old Dalbro's adopted. Maybe you better ask her."

I fancied I intercepted a wink, but I forgot all else in the sudden interest of the new arrival. She approached with the free-limbed movement of an athlete. Though every eye was on her, and the stare of Neil Fryer was the appraisement of an artist forgetful of the conventions, she came with no hesitancy or embarrassment. We might not have existed.

In the late afternoon sunlight her hair shone like burnished copper. The cream of the skin beneath it, the full-bosomed beauty of her, and the lithe gracefulness set even my staid blood coursing.

"Gad!" said Neil Fryer.

Suddenly there were but two in the picture, for their eyes met, and we others had become but a background. His tall form topped hers by perhaps an inch or so as they faced each other, held, I believe, in a magnetic spell. Then she thrust past him, continuing her way to the post office.

Fryer was recalled to himself.

"Your pardon, Miss Shannon," he said quickly, "but my friend here and I are anxious to find Captain Dalbro's and get our luggage up. If you would be good enough to direct us—"

He was quite boyish in the openness of his admiration. She gave him a moment's cold scrutiny, looking him over as only a scornful woman can, and entered the post office.

Fryer stood staring foolishly after her. Then his face flushed darkly.

Suddenly the young fellow who was the witting author of this contretemps gave a loud guffaw. The flush died from Neil Fryer's face. He turned, regarded the offender coldly, and asked very quietly in the hush that had fallen, "Am I to understand that you are laughing at me?"

"What if I am?"

Fryer just leaned over and took the youth by the nose, forcing him to his feet. One of the women gave a little cry, but the men edged back readily to give room for the contest.

With a quick curse, the young fellow struck at Fryer. It was pantherlike agility and strength against scientifically trained muscles. The fisherman was in a jersey, while Fryer's coat, which he had no time or thought to throw off, impeded him until it ripped. The post office cleared of its few occupants, all save

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Nance Shannon, who gave no evidence of interest. An unexpected blow caught the artist off his guard, staggering him.

Before Fryer could recover, the boy shot home another wicked blow, cutting his opponent's mouth badly; but before he could strike again, Nance Shannon appeared in the doorway.

"That's enough, Jack Kittridge!" she said, her eyes straight on him.

He hesitated; but once he met her gaze, it seemed that a hypnotic influence held him transfixed. He grinned confusedly, regarded his bloodied hands, and wiped them speculatively on his breeches.

Fryer got slowly to his feet, the back of his hand to his forehead. It seemed to take him a moment to get to the bottom of this respite; then he turned to the girl in the doorway.

"Look here!" he directed unsteadily. "You keep out of this! I don't need a woman to fight my battles for me!"

His gaze shifted to the crowd, and then to his opponent, who seemed to take new heart at this defiance of the girl; and they were at it again. In a matter of seconds it was over, and it was Jack Kittridge who was sullenly apologising.

"It's all right, son," said Neil Fryer amiably. "Get up and hustle those bags up to Dalbro's. Mind those tennis rackets. Will you go along with him, Marsten? I'll get straightened up a bit," he went on, with a deliberate glance at the girl in the doorway. "Then this young lady can show me the way up when she's going."

Nance Shannon's lip curled.

"Unless she's—afraid!" added Fryer.

She bit her lip and went inside.

The climb to Captain Dalbro's is a breakneck ascent. Sheer up the cliff, it seemed, we went.

"Better rest yourself, sir," said my guide, halfway up. He seemed to take his defeat in good part, and grinned through bloodied lips. "There's only one ever makes the trip without a stop, and that's her." He grinned again. "Unless it be him. Lord, what a feller! But he'll not beat her. Here's a good ledge, sir."

I was glad enough to comply, and for the first time to survey a scene that has ever since fascinated me. Below us, the slanting face of the cliff accommodated, on its various irregular ledges, a hotchpotch of cottages, for the most part vivid patches of colour, toned with the green of trailing vines and infant gardens, cradled in rocky hollows to which soil had been brought.

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Still lower, in a curving sweep that took in perhaps half the crescent of the little cove forming the harbour, was a straggling line of spindly-legged wharves, squat sheds, and fascinating ugly stores. I remember how peaceful it all looked, even to the mud flats, where the harbouring craft of the fisherfolk lay bedded, canted over—the tide being out. Shannon's Gut, to eastward of the point where the lighthouse stands, lay shimmering in the sunshine, as deceitful as a painted woman, and as deadly.

"An odd entrance to the harbour, ain't it, sir?" my guide said, not without pride. "See how it turns there, sharp to the east like, with the island to shut it in, so there's hardly sea room for a decent-sized craft? You'll get a better view above. It takes a rare hand to navigate there, when the tide's a twistin' and a squirlin' in Shannon's Gut. Some day, sir, when his pipe's a drawin' well, you get Cap. Dalbro to tell you the story about Shannon's Gut. Don't say I said so, but he'll have no one else tellin' it, though by rights it's a Kittridge story."

We went on up to where, straddling the cliff, stood the roomy cottage of the captain. He stumped to meet me genially, and introduced me both to my room, overlooking the sea, and to his daughter, Sylvia, who—for all that she made no impression such as Nance Shannon did—confirmed the idea that with such bait Dalbro might have drawn into his boarding net half the bachelors of the country, instead of merely two.

It was perhaps an hour later that the captain intruded on Sylvia's attempt to better our acquaintance by showing me the curios decorating the living-room walls.

"T'other chap's coming up the path now," he said. "Nance is bringing him up here."

He strode to the window. The girl sprang to her feet and joined him.

"Where? Oh, I see them! He's—he's got her arm, Dad!"

"Rum!" said Dalbro. "So he has!"

The captain's mutterings fell away, and—as if a common premonition had come to us—we all three stared at one another in an odd constraint of silence.

Was ever so strange a comradeship as that between these two—Neil Fryer, the roving, impecunious artist, and Nance Shannon, adopted daughter of Captain Dalbro?

After the day when Fryer won a temporary mastery over her, she fled the very sight of him; but I caught her once when he was out, crouching in one of the unconventional attitudes that seemed a part of her before a chair in his room, staring at a

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picture he had set upon it. She jumped to her feet at my step, but she was too proud not to face me.

"You like his work?" I asked.

"Yes," she said curtly.

After she had made her escape, I studied the picture. The rather harsh, radical treatment held a sudden revelation for me, for there was in it something of the sad, sweet wildness of the sea, and the mystery, the fear, and the wonder of it all were caught in the face of the fishergirl in the foreground. As I looked, I became aware that the face, though the features were unlike, was the face of Nance Shannon.

If my memory serves, it was that same night, or early the following morning before dawn, that I heard a commotion below stairs, the sound of a man's voice, and the strange wailing of a woman. Throwing on my dressing-gown, I hurried out, and on the landing of the stairs I found Sylvia, shivering with cold and terror.

"It's Nance," she said. "She's been walking in her sleep again. Dad fetched her in, and she's crying down there."

Neil Fryer came out of his room just then, and she told him.

"Well, no need for you to get your death of cold over it," he said.

Sylvia seemed suddenly and becomingly conscious of being there in the immodesty of her nightgown.

"I am cold," she admitted, "but it does frighten me so, when she goes that way."

She looked up at Fryer with a look in the eyes of her that brought hard lines to his face. Then, suddenly, he swept her up in his arms, carried her to her room, and tucked her in as if she were a child and not a woman grown. He was back in an instant, joking about it, but there was a constraint in his voice as he muttered, "Little fool!"

We hurried for our rooms at the sound of heavy steps on the stairs, and the voice of Nance Shannon protesting, "I'm all right now, Father!"

Next day Fryer asked me to go with him. I sat on the cliff edge while he painted and kept up a rambling conversation.

"Marsten," he said presently, laying down his brushes, "there's something in your line I want you to do for me. There's a key to the life of Nance Shannon, and I'm convinced that Dalbro holds it."

I did not tell him that I had already tried to get it. He resumed his work, then stopped again, and sought the horizon where sea and sky met, his lids narrowed.

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"Funny kid, that!" he mused. "Yesterday I happened to be in the village when she came down. There were supplies to carry back, and, when I insisted, she couldn't very well refuse my aid. You know that alcove in the cliff, just as you turn to come up by that blatant green cottage? Well, there was a young lad in there, and a girl. He was making love to her with all the grace of a mastiff pup. You know how silly an overgrown man is when he gets a bit shy! Well, he put a tentative arm around her, and, as she did not repulse him, gets courage for a man-sized embrace. It all happened in a flash, and we were past, unobserved by them."

Fryer painted for a while again, leaning back to get the effect, and whistling through his teeth. Then he concluded:

"I looked at Nance, of course, to see if that would bring a smile; but her face was almost distorted—beautifully distorted, though. If I can remember it, it will go on canvas. She looked at me with a curl of her lip and a flash of her eye.

"'Men are beasts!' she said.

"'But even beasts,' I told her, 'may be tamed by those who are not afraid!'

"She shot back at me, with that wonderfully curling lip, 'I'm going for a day's fishing on Thursday—alone. There's room for two in the boat!'"

Fryer laughed, and painted vigorously.

"Going?" I asked.

"Rather!" he said. "But she's running no chances with me—that way." He daubed again with amazing strokes. "I don't suppose," he added whimsically, "that she knows the old tale of the man who allowed a tame tiger to lick his hand."

Fryer's day of fishing with Nance Shannon must have been a mutually satisfactory experience, for they came up from the sea, side by side, with the step of equals and the talk of comrades. After that, though gradually, they became almost inseparable; but I, who remembered the little incident of Fryer's telling, noted that there was never for a moment any suggestion of man and woman, of other than a rigorously platonic affair—never a touch of hand in hand, or even a taking of her arm over rough ways, as on that first day of all.

As for Sylvia, she sulked a little at first. Then, watching the clear-cut comradeship of it, she laughed rather scornfully. Once, however, I found her weeping over a pile of greasy dishes.

Our month was quickly up, and I determined to remain another with the spell of the place upon me.

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"How about you, Fryer?" I asked laughingly, at breakfast.

"How about me, Nance?" he parried.

"I hope you can stay too, of course!" she said frankly.

Afterwards I congratulated him, half jokingly, on the progress of his affair. He swung on me.

"Progress! And you a writer supposed to know something of psychology! My dear fellow, did you notice any girlish confusion—or whatever you fellows would call it—or even any of her old resentment of me? No, sir! I fill a gap as a playmate; but affection in the sense of love? I'm nothing to her."

He laughed, but he swung away from me for a long walk alone along the line of cliffs edging the coast.

It must have been about that time that I met Jack Kittridge and questioned him again about Shannon's Gut.

"This story you speak of must be common knowledge," I said.

"Ah, so it is, but not a word will anyone breathe that's like to reach his ears. They do say just after it happened—though I wasn't here then—the cap'n learns how they're talkin' a lot down the village—mostly Mart Smalley, who always had a loose tongue. The cap'n come down with his stick, sir, and Mart couldn't get about for weeks, and lost the best of the fishing. You'll not tell on me, sir?"

I went on up the breakneck steps of the cliff face, and so to the top, where Dalbro's house perched on a spot as level as your hand. Fryer had been busy for a day or two, measuring out and searching about for odd material—scantlings, netting, and what not. Now the thing was complete, and an improved tennis court stood atop the cliff.

As I came up, he waved a triumphant hand, then continued his game. Nance was nowhere in sight. He was teaching young Sylvia Dalbro how to play tennis . . .

That night Nance Shannon walked in her sleep again. At about half past one I awoke, to find Neil Fryer in my room.

"There's something wrong," he said. "Nance has just come in. She's back in bed without waking. Sylvia says her father's gone. He heard Nance, followed her, as usual, and he hasn't come back. Get on your things!"

Sylvia appeared then, and clung timorously to Fryer's arm.

"Nance always goes to Shannon's Gut," she said, and shivered. "You know the path, Neil. Oh, hurry! The tide turned long ago, and with that wind—"

Fryer led the way. Across the headland upon which the Dalbro house stood, and which formed on the one side a portion

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of the harbour crescent, and on the other the sharp angle of Shannon's Gut, a single path led down a dangerous declivity to the sands below. Near the bottom, a series of natural steps gave the only possible access to the beach.

By a curious freak of nature, the steps led into a rock formation shaped like a huge basin, thirty feet in diameter, seaweed-clad and slippery, and worn deep by the action of the waves and tides. At either side were narrow gullies, which caused the tide, when rushing up the Gut, to fill the low-lying basin quickly, entering it in a spout of foam by the eastward gully and spuming out, with a sucking undertow, at the other.

We made the descent with difficulty, torn at by the wind, and with the ominous sound of the tide in our ears in the windless intervals.

There, in the fitful moonlight, with the water just up to his armpits, sat the captain, clawing at the slippery sides of the sheer rock basin to offset the first forerunners of the incoming tide, and cursing the ocean.

Neil Fryer burst into a peal of laughter that echoed weirdly from the rocks.

"Don't laugh, you fool!" stormed Dalbro. "I think I've broken my damn leg, and in five minutes this place'll be a death trap! Lend a hand here, quick, and watch yourselves!"

We got him out with some difficulty, and with infinite care we helped him to scale the cliff. He was quivering like a leaf, but the sound of the first booming of the tide through the basin gave him a snarling strength. He shook his fist at the death trap below.

"Damn you!" he swore. "You'll not get me! You'll not get me—and you'll not get her!"

We carried him up, found his leg to be only badly sprained and lacerated, and put him to bed; the expression in his eyes was that of a man who has seen death and found it hard to look upon.

Three days passed. The rising of the wind that night was the earnest of a gale that smote from the east, so that even within the harbouring cove the vessels, bare-masted, sheltered in shivering apprehension.

Dalbro lay on a couch where he could not see the sweep and fury of the storm, and watched in moody silence the spattering of great drops of rain against the casement window. Nance roamed outside, her wild nature exulting in the storm, but—though she lingered once or twice to give him opportunity—Neil Fryer made no attempt to join her. Once, when he called

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a half ironic good-bye—interrupting some lively badinage with Sylvia—she slammed the door in a way for which the wind could not account. I saw an exultant smile on Neil's face, for which I later took him to task.

"You're playing with fire—both ways," I protested.

"I've always been accused," he laughed, "of having a bit of old Nick in me! Marsten, you writer chaps ought to know that there is jealousy in every woman, and that love itself is half compounded of it!"

Then his mood changed, and he stood ignoring me, staring out into the wildness of the storm.

After the three days of storm there followed a day of calm, so sudden, so unexpected, so subdued, the atmosphere so hot, that it brought no sense of peace after tumult, but rather of foreboding. The captain moved himself and his couch and his still painful leg to the verandah, and lay there, cursing the heat. Sylvia and Neil Fryer alternated between tennis and cooling drinks, which he concocted with her aid, and of which Nance would not partake. As for Nance, she came and went like a restless spirit, and the eyes of the girl were burning orbs.

The sea lay leaden in its sweep; and yet we could tell, from the pounding of the breakers outside, that the aftermath of storm had brought a tremendous ground swell.

Night came on, and the dull pounding seemed to be nature's echo of one's own pulse. The moon rose out of the eastern sea beyond Shannon's Gut, and rode the sky like a dull counterpart of the flaming sun of day.

The captain called me to him. He lay inert on the couch, and a sprawling shadow of Dutchman's pipe etched an odd pattern on him, leaving his face exposed and white as the face of a corpse.

"Confound that moonlight, Marsten!" he said testily. "It affects the sea—and those who dwell by it. Give this couch a leg about, will you? Where's Nance? Fetch her to me, will you?"

He was querulous as a child, but I gladly humoured him. I walked along the edge of the cliff, partly because the glamour of that dull, dead moonlight over the sea held me, partly because I fancied I had seen Nance Shannon pass that way.

There was a tropical spell over land and sea that heated the blood and left the skin without relief of moisture. A rank growth of grass flourished atop the cliff just here, and as I slowly approached the spot, I saw an object, like some wild creature crouching low.

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My step must have been muffled by the grass, or she was so intent she did not hear me. She was lying full length, as might a child on a hearth, reading, her head raised on her elbows, her chin cupped in her hands; but her reading was of a little drama on the ledge some yards below.

A man and a girl sat there. Their low laughter reached us. He seemed to be bantering her, as Neil's custom was with Sylvia. Then, suddenly, he rose and stood, head flung back, his hair rumpled boyishly, his profile clearly defined against the growing silver of the sky. They faced each other for a moment—man and girl; then, as we watched, their figures seemed, as if impelled by a power beyond themselves, to move nearer and merge into one.

The girl in the grass gave a low cry, part laugh, part sob.

"Beasts!" I heard her mutter fiercely. "All alike! And they call it love!"

She laughed again, more scornfully, and, jumping up, fled into the night.

I retraced my steps more slowly.

"Nance just came in," Dalbro informed me. "I called, but she wouldn't come. Never mind—she's upstairs now. Come here—I want to talk to you. This damnable night has got my nerves on edge."

He smoked for a while in moody silence. Then he stirred uneasily, to say, "You've asked me once or twice about Shannon's Gut here. I suppose you've just heard rumours, eh? Damned loose-tongued lot in the village! They just hinted, eh? Scared! I've got 'em scared of their tongues!"

He laughed rumblingly, but quickly on top of his laugh came his question: "Are you afraid of death, Marsten?"

"No more nor less than most men. Why?"

"I suppose," he said, "it makes a difference, eh, just what's charged to a man's account in life? Don't look at me that way, Marsten! I'm thinking of Kittridge—Bill Kittridge. A local man—mate of mine. When I had the *Sea Tramp*—she was all her name implied—he shipped with me. Knocked around the world, handling any cargo that fell to our lot. We were loading on the Irish coast—Lough Swilly way—and were held up over a little cargo dispute. The Irish folk treated us white, and there were girls a plenty. Bill and I both had girls at home then, you understand, and we'd kept our distance of others.

"We were to clear at daybreak one morning, and the night before it was just such a night as this—damnable moonlight, and a soft, dead sticky atmosphere that set a man boiling. Bill came

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aboard just before daybreak, and a woman with him to see him off—a slip of a thing with a shawl about her head, standing there, whitefaced, in the dead stillness of a sticky dawn. I can see her now, Marsten, just as she stood there and waved. I didn't question him, you understand—a man's doings ashore are his own affair; but we had a bit of wind in the run across, and Bill got done in by a falling spar. We buried him at sea.

"Four years later a woman came to the cove here, with a child of three, looking for a man called Shannon, who had shipped aboard the *Sea Tramp*, and whose child it was. I was at sea then, but they tell me when she learnt that there was no Shannon in the village, and never had been, she stood still for a moment. She'd taken all this while to scrape up enough to come and see why he never wrote, as he promised, and why her letters were returned by the post office.

"She looked at the men standing there and staring at her, and she clasped the child to her breast and cried out aloud, 'Tis a liar he was to me, and 'tis the beasts all men are!'

"And then she fled from them. She had no money left, and there was the child, but someone gave her work, and she managed to make out after a fashion. People said her mind was going, Marsten. Then one day I came home from sea. No one told me, and I came on up here to my wife. That was before Sylvia was born. In the morning I went for a walk on the beach, before breakfast, and on the way back I met the woman and her child just at the foot of the cliff, by the basin there."

The captain paused in his recital. He was sitting up now, breathing heavily, and the face of the man was full of horror.

"Perhaps she—remembered—the skipper of the *Sea Tramp*; but whether her mind was gone, or what, she fled from me, leaving the child. I tried to warn her that the tide was rising, and at the Gut it comes in powerful fast; but she fled as if I were a ghost. I had to hurry to save the child. I bade the child call her, and she came back; but the tide was bad that day. Already the basin was full and spouting foam, and I had to hold the child in safety above it. I called to the woman to beware as she clambered recklessly up, but she lost her balance and the basin took her. I was helpless there with the crying child. You know how the sea comes snorting up the Gut, and pounces on the basin. I saw her clawing, clawing at the slippery sides, like a victim of a nightmare; and then a wave swept in, and she was gone!"

The captain's hands, talon-like, were stretched out as if to grasp the woman. Then he sank back and said dully, "It sucks them down and out, you know—the tide does when it races up

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the Gut and through the basin." After a pause, he added, "I took the child in, but she's always been a wild thing, with no use at all for the men. When she grew to be a woman, and no man at all in her life, nor like to be, I thought maybe if she could meet more educated ones than our rough fellows here she might respond. I advertised, as you know. Damn that moonlight, Marsten! Shift me round a bit farther, will you?"

I obeyed.

"What do you think of a man like that—to give his name as Shannon, and to make promises as false as the name to a woman who trusted him?"

"A beast!" I said, remembering the word of Nance Shannon. "But why did he let her know he came from here?"

"A slip of the tongue," said Dalbro slowly, "has ruined many a trickster. A man's never safe that way. His conscience, or something, makes him a babbling fool at times. Who's coming?"

"It's Neil and Sylvia, Captain."

"Sylvia's a little idiot," said Dalbro sharply. Then he laughed oddly. "Her father's daughter," he said, "and as crazy for men as Nance is against 'em!"

He reverted to the old topic again.

"They've called it Shannon's Gut ever since. The village, you understand, cross-questioned me, as skipper of the *Sea Tramp*, so that I had to tell the story. There was an inquiry, too, about the woman. D'ye know, it's got about since that her spirit haunts the Gut? I figure it's Nance, walking in her sleep, and someone's seen her from the water. Good God, Marsten, why do I stay here? That basin's like a hungry mouth, trying to get her and me! There, leave me, Marsten, and forget my silly babbling. I've talked more than is good for me tonight!"

I sought out Fryer. He was sitting on the living-room couch, his head in his hands. He looked up, and saw me.

"Women are fools," he said.

"Yes," I assented drily, "and they make still bigger fools of men!"

He read my knowledge in my eyes.

"You saw?" he said slowly.

"By accident. It's not fair to either of them to make love to both, Neil."

"Love, nothing! The little fool threw herself at me. Blame the night partly—oh, and myself, if you like! I've given her a straight lecture on life. Lesson in it for myself, too. How's the old boy?"

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"Restless. He's worried over Nance."

"So am I. Look here, Marsten, tell the Cap. not to worry tonight. He's helpless, of course, with that game leg of his, but I've a notion to spend the night on the verandah, and he can bank on my looking after her if she does any of her sleepwalking stunts again. I don't feel like bed tonight."

I nodded and, turning to go, fancied that the glowing eyes of Nance Shannon were staring out of the gloom. They vanished, and I laughed at myself for letting my imagination run riot on this night of deadly moon-flecked madness.

At two o'clock, there was a little stir and a faint breeze rippled its way inwards with the coming tide, and sleep came to us in the Dalbro house on the cliff. Even Neil Fryer, smoking interminable cigarettes on the verandah, dozed in his chair, to wake after a time with a start. The details of the strange sequence of events I can only give from my own slight first-hand knowledge, and from a careful gathering of the facts later.

Fryer sat up with a shiver, at the first touch of coolness following the almost tropical heat. Beyond the tennis court a figure moved slowly, with the mechanical movements of a sleepwalker. He blinked himself fully awake to the reality of the apparition, drew on his discarded shoes, and followed.

Almost as if conscious of this self-appointed guardianship, Nance quickened her steps. As always, she headed directly for the precipitous descent to the basin, and her figure disappeared over the brow of the cliff. By the time Fryer reached this point, she had climbed down, with great agility, to the basin below.

He followed with all possible caution, lest he should disturb her harmfully. The dull pounding of the surf outside the island mingled with the singular sound that gave individuality to the Gut—the voice of the tide, not lapping its way quietly in, but coming with an ominous, warning monotone and a recurrent roar, as if the undertow sang its deadly song and each successive wave the chorus.

She stood on the beach now, dead white as it was in the moonlight. She was dressed in some stuff that appeared black. As she stood, she raised her arms, outstretching them towards the Gut that took her mother; and the shadows weirdly kept pace with her.

At first Neil Fryer stood watching. Then, to his amazement, she turned and held out her arms, as if she saw him and welcomed him. His pulses racing, he went to her upon the sand.

Behind them the first wave found its way into the basin, and a second, spouting feebly through the eastward notch, sucked its

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way out, with a rattle in the throat of the western one. Neil tried to get behind the girl, that he might gently urge her back to safety; but she retreated farther along the beach. In sudden desperation he took her arm. It was firm and cold to his grasp, but she did not shrink, as was her wont, from the contact on her bare flesh.

Then it was that the passions of the night possessed the man, and he forgot everything but that she was there, as beautiful as the night and as alluring. He took her in his arms, and she lay passive while he kissed her again and again; but suddenly her form became rigid in his embrace, and she leapt from him, turning upon him fiercely. "Men are beasts!" she flashed. "Even you! Tonight—first with *her*—and now with *me*!"

"Nance!" he cried appealingly.

She laughed, and the curl of her lip was there again.

"No sleepwalker tonight, Neil Fryer," she told him. "The night you keep watch, Nance Shannon stays awake. You thought I didn't hear you say that you would? So easily fooled, Neil Fryer? And you promised to look after me, didn't you? Thanks, but Nance Shannon can take care of herself!" She glanced behind her. "If she cares to!" she added hissingly.

He turned his thoughts from her at that, and drew a quick breath of alarm. She laughed again oddly. The rattle in the throat of the western notch had ceased now. It was sucking through and spuming out too great a flood for that.

"What does it matter?" she said. "My mother went this way. And you? One less of you in the world to trouble women! You think I'm mad, Neil Fryer. Well, not that way. You came into my life, forcing your way where you were not wanted. No, keep away—or run, if you care so much for your life! You deceived me into thinking you were not as other men, with their loves; and then you left me for *her*. I hate you, Neil Fryer! I hate myself for ever listening to you!"

"Nance! Nance!" he cried. "Come! We must go at once!"

"Are you so afraid of death?"

"No, but I want life, Nance, for you—with you—"

"My mother went this way. Hers was the only love I ever knew. A mother's love is true, but men's is only passion! No! Keep away, I tell you, Neil Fryer, for you could hardly save yourself now, and if you lay finger on me I shall fight. Go, now, if you will. You're strong, and there may be still a fighting chance."

"And you?"

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"My mother went this way."

He strode to her and took her arm firmly. She did not redeem her promise to struggle, for he smiled at her now, and there was tenderness, I fancy, in his eyes.

"You mad, wild, Irish thing!" he said softly. "It's too late now, Nance. There's only death in the basin, and there's not a foothold in the cliff elsewhere. I've often wondered how death would come to me at last. I've faced it before, but never so well as now. Nance, look at me! You've been a rare comrade while it lasted—but it's love I wanted. Passion, you say—just passion? Listen, Nance Shannon! There's five minutes at least left us. Though you are strong, I am a man, and stronger. I could have my way with you and take the sweetness of it while it lasts; but there's more than passion to the love of a man—when it is love. It shall be as you say, whether I kiss you, Nance dear, before we go!"

The strip of beach grew less. Behind them the basin was a foaming mass, a certain death trap now. In Shannon's Gut the tide runs fast. He looked at her.

"It's cowardly to wait for it by inches," he said. "Shall we go and meet it, Nance Shannon?"

She looked at the awesome surge of the tidal water, with the declining moon eerily upon it. Then she straightened, turned to him, and nodded. He took her hand, as he might a child's whom he was to lead through a dangerous place.

"Kiss me first!" she said, and lifted her face to him.

I stood on the beach by Shannon's Gut at dawn, and in the slack of the tide and the gleam of the sunlight it shimmered—quiet, beautiful, deceitful as a painted woman. In the basin a two-foot depth of water lay, and some small fishes played at tag in temporary captivity. Beyond the Gut, the rocky island that helps to shape its treacherous length rose in its grey barrenness.

It seemed the memory of a horrid dream, to think of the thing I had seen two hours before, when, from the cliff top, wakened by Sylvia to the fact that Nance had gone, I hurried out to find the tide in flood at Shannon's Gut.

Dalbro stood beside me now, suffering the torturing aftermath of the descent, and forgetting it in his agony of spirit.

"Tell me again," he pleaded. "They stood just here, you say?"

"Just here, as near as I can judge from watching from above."

"Aye, aye—and then they started out to meet it, hand in hand, and stopped, and coming back—"

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"They kissed, and so embraced until the water swirled about their feet."

"And then, you say, they divested themselves of most of their clothes?"

I nodded, and the picture came strongly to mind.

"They stood like two young Olympians, half naked in the moonlight. Then, hand in hand, they went in to meet the rising tide."

Dalbro seated himself heavily on the slippery edge of the basin, and covered his face with his hands.

"My daughter—Nance!" I heard him say.

Boats tardily searched the Gut, where last night there were none when needed most. The captain looked up, and saw me watching them.

"No use!" he said dully. "Shannon's Gut does not return its dead. It sucked *her* out. We never found *her*."

At noon they gave up the search.

At sundown old man Kittridge, grandfather of Jack, came in from a solitary time of fishing. He reported that he had seen what must have been a manifestation of the Kittridge spirit on the island, in the dying light of day.

They told him about Nance.

"'Twas the girl and her mother, then," he affirmed. "Come to think on it, there were two of 'em—for I glimpsed 'em white and stark as you please."

Few paid much attention to this news, for the old man was failing in mind, and filling the vacancy with increased imagination. But young Jack Kittridge hurried up with word of it.

The captain had sunk into a lethargy, from which even this rumour could not rouse him.

"It was right," said Jack, turning to me, and full of pride of it, "it was right for a Kittridge to see the Kittridge spirits. Others searched the island, didn't they? But they saw nothin'!"

At that the captain raised himself, and pointed a finger at the bearer of the news.

"Kittridge spirits—nonsense!" he cried, with a flare in his eyes. "My woman and my daughter, I tell you—flesh of my flesh! Only a Dalbro could face the flood like that. It skipped a generation, the spirit of the Dalbros, but it's there, in her. Go tell the village, Jack Kittridge, that if I take the pride I'll bear the shame. Your uncle's memory bore it long enough, for we buried Bill Kittridge at sea with no shame upon him save what I put from my own shoulders, that he might carry it to the depths with him. Go away—leave me!"

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Open-mouthed, Jack Kittridge stared at the man. Then, recovering from his first dismay, he fled.

As for me, I did not break in upon Dalbro's mood. He said, at last, calling me to him, "Did he say something about her—her spirit being seen again? Well, that's always been the story. Old man Kittridge is in his dotage, and yet—she was Irish, lad. She believed in things when I met her first up Lough Swilly way—in fairies, and spirits—and men."

I said nothing, for my thought was rather with Nance than with the mother of Nance. It pleased me to think that the island could conceal more than ghosts, if they chose not to be seen in the light of day. I also thought that when night fell fully over Shannon's Gut, I might borrow a boat and risk the passage.

It was under cover of night that I ferried two cold, exultant spirits back across the Styx. I asked them how, when men declared no one could swim Shannon's Gut in time of flood, the crossing had been made.

"No one here in the village," said the woman proudly, "until a man came!"

He shook his head at that, smiling whimsically. Gratefully he accepted a cigarette with fingers that were not quite steady.

"You can lay it all, Marsten," he said, "to the lips of a woman!"

It was from those lips, because of the rightful pride in the heart of her, that I learnt, months after, the full story of those few last moments on the beach.

So we came in safety to the curiously formed rock basin where a mother and her daughter both met their destinies. I left the young Olympians to make the steep ascent together, while I sought the harbour with my borrowed craft, and the treacherous tide sang its song of death up Shannon's Gut.

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BIRTHDAYS

In the intervals of building a sandcastle, three children who have established friendly relations compare their respective ages.

It appears that Angus was born in January, Cyril in December. Further confidences reveal that Barbara is seven weeks older than Angus, and twelve days younger than Cyril.

In view of these disclosures, on what day does Barbara celebrate her birthday?

For baffled readers, the answer is at the foot of page 159.

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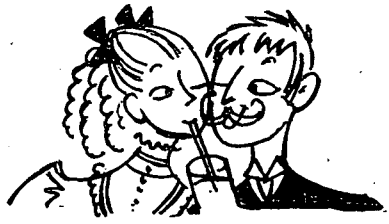

All my Eye!

Oh! too convincing—dangerously dear—
In woman's eye the unanswerable tear!

GEORGE, LORD BYRON, *The Corsair*

Before you leap . . .

"I am half distracted, Captain Shandy," said Mrs. Wadman, "a mote—or sand—or something—I know not what, has got into this eye of mine—do look into it . . ." In saying which, Mrs. Wadman edged herself close in beside my uncle Toby . . . "Do look into it," said she.

If thou lookest, uncle Toby, thou art undone.

LAURENCE STERNE, *Tristram Shandy*

Fiery Gaze

Some man one day, a better man than I am
Will look into your eyes and lose his heart,
And quoting, maybe, bits of Omar Khayyam
Will take you (sans the loaf of bread) apart
'Neath some convenient bough to sing your praises,
And lover-like, still gazing in your eyes,
Inform you with a fierceness that amazes
That you are very beautiful and wise.

F. A. V. MADDEN, *To Miss X*

An Eye-opener

"I told your mother I was a sea-captain, sailing to Jamaica, and she turned and opened wide her eyes . . ."

"Yes?" said Miranda.

"I was only going to say it's her eyes, if you'll allow me to say

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so, that makes her different-looking from other people. They open so wide you don't seem to get to the end of the colour, do you? It's as though it were that kind of blue right up inside her forehead."

ENID BAGNOLD, *Loved and Envied*

A-goggle !

Exquisite torment, dainty Mrs. Hargreaves
Trips down the High Street, slaying hearts a-plenty;
Stricken and doomed are all who meet her eye-shots!
Bar Mr. Hargreaves.

Grocers a-tremble, bash their brassy scales down,
Careless of weight and hacking cheese regardless;
Postmen shoot letters in the nearest ash-can,
Dogs dance in circles.

. . . Back to "Balmoral" trips the goddess lightly;
Night comes at length, and Mr. Hargreaves with it,
Casting his bowler glumly on the sideboard:
"Gimme my dinner."

D. B. WYNDHAM LEWIS, *Sapphics*

Bolt from the Blue

"Let me present Mr. Middleton," said the Marchesa, and Madame Solario bowed, and with the faint hesitation which seemed part of her manner, she looked at him. Her eyes were of a violet-blue that might have been taking a little reflection of colour from the pansies in her hat; and, just as she had hesitated to look, she hesitated to look away again, so that it was impossible not to look back at those beautiful eyes.

ANON, *Madame Solario*

Light-hearted

The light that lies
In woman's eyes,
Has been my heart's undoing.

THOMAS MOORE

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Surrender

She huddled up close to Rodolphe. Her eyes were filled with tears and sparkled like flames beneath the waters. Her breast was heaving with little short, sharp gasps. Never had he felt such love for her. Swept off his feet, he said, " What must we do? What do you wish to do? "

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, *Madame Bovary*

Well Hidden

She is not fair to outward view
As many maidens be;
Her loveliness I never knew
Until she smiled on me.
Oh! then I saw her eye was bright,
A well of love, a spring of light.

HARTLEY COLERIDGE

Glow—and Glint

How beautiful she was, so warm, so alive, so feminine! . . . " Micaela," he began, and then stopped. He was betrothed to Donna Luisa now, he must be careful . . . he had not come here to make love to Micaela, God forbid! He wished her eyes did not glow so softly, so warmly, so unlike the cold brightness of Donna Luisa's eyes, that were as hard as jewels.

DOROTHY MACKINDER, *Brief was the Laurel*

Seen through

O that languishing yawn!
O those eloquent eyes!
I was drunk with the dawn
Of a splendid surmise—
I was stung by a look, I was slain by a tear, by a tempest of sighs.

Then I whispered " I see
The sweet secret thou keepest,
And the yearning for ME
That thou wistfully weepest!
And the question is ' Licence or Banns? ' though undoubtedly
Banns are the cheapest."

LEWIS CARROLL, *Atalanta in Camden Town*

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I even asked the police to help me . . .

IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

BY HENRY CECIL

WE were bemoaning the fate of George. He had just gone down for another eighteen months and he'd been out only three months from his last stretch.

"He was too ambitious," said Tiny. "Trying to take away half the contents of a house."

"The owner was away," said George's pal, who had not been caught.

"Yes," agreed Tiny, "but carting furniture away in broad daylight is asking for trouble."

"I don't know about that," said Mr. Parker—he had only recently been introduced to us. "I have done it myself and even got the police to help. In Park Lane, too. Would you care to hear about it?"

We said we would.

"You remember," he said, "just before the beginning of the war a number of wealthy people suddenly found they had important business in America or New Zealand, shut up their houses and went off like a streak of lightning."

We remembered.

"Well, I thought I'd call on one of them just to see if everything was going on all right in his absence. I noticed a nice house in Park Lane with shutters up. I looked for the house in a directory and found that Mr. Alfred Poppleton lived there. I decided to see how Mr. Alfred Poppleton's affairs were going on.

"I called one afternoon. I rang the bell in case there was a caretaker. There was—in the person of a toothless old hag with an impediment in her speech and considerable impediments in her intelligence. However, I did manage to find out from her that Mr. Poppleton was in America and that any

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communication for him should be sent to his bank. I also was able to see that the house had been left fully furnished—and in very good taste too, I may say. I managed to persuade the hag to show me over.

"I decided I would like Mr. Poppleton's furniture. After all, if he'd really been attached to it he shouldn't have left it behind like that. Before I went I told the hag that Mr. Poppleton owed me a lot of money, but I don't know if she took it in. I then consulted Messrs. Hogg & Cooper, a very respectable firm of solicitors, and I told them that Mr. Alfred Poppleton of No. 180 Park Lane owed me £10,000. Would they try to recover it for me? I told them the circumstances in which the money came to be owed and I produced an odd letter or two in which Mr. Poppleton had promised to pay me as soon as he could. I gave Messrs. Hogg & Cooper £10 in cash on account of costs and asked them to proceed as speedily as possible.

"Mr. Cowley, their managing clerk, was delighted. Claims for £10,000 were not too common and, anyway, if it turned out to be nonsense, ten pounds on account of costs would keep Messrs. Hogg & Cooper on the right side. I gave them my name (or rather the name under which I was then working) and my address. I'd taken a flat for a week or so. I also mentioned casually that Mr. Poppleton was staying down at a hotel in Surrey—the Grantley Arms Hotel, Sibley—in case of air raids, I added. I left Mr. Cowley beaming, and I took the next train down to Sibley. I put up at the Grantley Arms Hotel under the name of Alfred Poppleton.

"A few days later I found a letter in my rack. It was from Messrs. Hogg & Cooper. It said that they had been consulted by Mr. Raymond of 10 Bar Court in regard to a sum of £10,000 which I owed him. Their client had acted with great patience but could not wait for his money any longer. Would I please send them a cheque for that amount together with thirteen shillings and fourpence (their costs), or alternatively the name of a solicitor who would accept service of proceedings on my behalf? An impudent claim, I said to myself, and with the letter in my pocket I went straight to that highly reputable firm of solicitors, Messrs. Reeve & Ruddick.

"'I am Alfred Poppleton of 180 Park Lane,' I said to the managing clerk who interviewed me.

"'Please sit down,' he said. 'Mr. Reeve will see you.'

"Shortly afterwards I was shown into Mr. Reeve's office.

"'Good morning, sir,' he said. 'Do you mind telling me on whose introduction you are consulting us?'

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" ' The evening paper,' I said. 'I was struck by the way you handled that claim against Sir George Martin. I have an equally impudent claim against me, but for twice as much, and I rather suspect the same people are behind the plaintiff.'

" ' Most interesting,' said Mr. Reeve. ' Perhaps you will tell me all about it.'

" I produced the letter from Messrs. Hogg & Cooper.

" ' I know Hogg & Cooper,' I said, ' and I'm quite sure they wouldn't put forward what they know to be a false claim, but their client is lying to them. Personally I think it is merely bluff. I don't owe the man a penny and if you write back a strong letter I think he'll drop the whole thing. If he carries his bluff as far as a writ, by all means accept service on my behalf. No doubt you would like me to give you a retainer.'

" ' I will have one prepared,' said Mr. Reeve, and rang the bell.

" ' If you want to get in touch with me I am staying at the moment at the Grantley Arms Hotel, Sibley. I've shut up my house. Not that I'm frightened of bombing for myself—but it's not fair on the servants. As you don't know me,' I added, ' perhaps you'd like something on account,' and I handed him what I called the nominal sum of ten pounds. I duly signed the retainer and took leave of an extremely polite Mr. Reeve.

" Two days later, while I was staying at Bar Court, a letter arrived from Messrs. Hogg & Cooper asking me to call. I called. I was shown a letter from Messrs. Reeve & Ruddick. It stated that they and their client were amazed at the impudent claim put forward by Mr. Raymond and added they would be pleased to accept service of a writ if proceedings were seriously intended, which, they added, they took leave to doubt.

" ' Very well,' I said, ' go right ahead. I'll give him impudent claim! Can the writ be served on him personally? ' I added.

" ' Quite impossible, I'm afraid,' said Mr. Cowley. ' Contrary to professional etiquette. His solicitors have agreed to accept service.'

" ' But he deserves it,' I said. ' I'd like to serve him in the presence of his bankers.'

" ' I'm afraid we couldn't possibly do that, sir.'

" ' Oh, well,' I said regretfully, ' it can't be helped—but sue him at once and make the costs as heavy as possible.'

" Mr. Cowley smiled. ' We'll certainly do our best.'

" ' Meanwhile,' I said, ' I imagine you will like a little more on account,' and I handed him twenty pounds. Mr. Cowley gave me a receipt and I left for Sibley. Sure enough, a few days

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later I received a letter from Messrs. Reeve & Ruddick stating that Mr. Raymond had issued a writ and they had accepted service on my behalf. Would I call at my convenience to discuss the conduct of the case, the briefing of counsel, et cetera? I duly called.

"'Tell me, Mr. Reeve,' I said, 'how long can I keep the plaintiff out of his money without spending more than twenty pounds on my own costs?'

"Mr. Reeve was a little surprised. 'Do you mean you owe the money?' he asked.

"'Well,' I said, 'it's a long story and, on consideration, I don't feel inclined to go into court about it. But if I can keep the plaintiff off for a week or two, he'll have to whistle for his money anyway.'

"'That can be done quite easily.'

"'Very well, then,' I said. 'Hold him off for three weeks and then consent to judgment. Don't ask me where I'm going or what I'm going to do. Just tell me how much you want for your own costs to carry out those instructions.'

"Mr. Reeve rang a bell and consulted his costs' clerk. He would require a further fifteen pounds. I produced the cash.

"'Can you assure me,' I said. 'that judgment will not be obtained against me for three weeks?'

"'I can,' said Mr. Reeve.

"'Very well. Is there anything more you require of me?'

"'No, thank you,' said Mr. Reeve.

"'Well, good morning, then,' I said, 'and thank you very much for your help. I don't suppose you will ever see me again and certainly Mr. Raymond won't.' And with that I departed and gave up my room at the Grantley Arms Hotel.

"In due course—three weeks later to be exact—I was again asked to call on Messrs. Hogg & Cooper.

"'Good news, Mr. Raymond,' said Mr. Cowley, though he didn't look terribly pleased; 'the defendant has submitted to judgment.'

"'Good,' I said. 'Can I have a cheque?'

"'Oh! he hasn't paid yet.'

"'But he must,' I said, 'and at once. He'll do me out of it if he can. He'll do a bunk and take everything away with him. What can you do to stop him?'

"'Well,' said Mr. Cowley, 'if he doesn't pay at once we could put in execution at his house—that is, if he has anything there.'

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" 'Anything there!' I said. ' It's full of stuff. At least it was,' I added anxiously. ' You'd better hurry.'

" ' I'll ring up his solicitors and ask what proposals their client has for satisfying the judgment.'

" He did so. He talked to Mr. Reeve. Eventually he put down the receiver.

" ' I believe you're right,' he said. ' From what Reeve told me I think he's withdrawn his instructions from them and is going to make off.'

" 'What can you do?' I said.

" ' I'll put the sheriff in as quickly as possible,' said Mr. Cowley. ' We have leave to enforce the judgment.'

" ' Good,' I said. ' Will you need me any more?'

" ' No, thank you, except just to sign this authority. Thank you. You can rely on my getting on with it at once.'

" Three weeks later I watched with interest the removal of all the furniture from 180 Park Lane. As each pantechnicon was ready a policeman held up the traffic to let it out. From what I could see the toothless hag did not seem unduly worried.

" Shortly afterwards I received a cheque from Messrs. Hogg & Cooper for £7,500. They were sorry the furniture did not fetch enough to satisfy the entire judgment, but, after deducting the sheriff's costs and charges and their own costs, that was all that was left. Would I send my instructions as to the recovery of the balance?

" I cashed the cheque for £7,500 and wrote to Messrs. Hogg & Cooper that I was very disappointed at the amount recovered and that I would not trouble them any more. And I didn't."

IT'S TIME, GENTLEMEN!

Plop fall the plums ; but there are still seven.
Let those gentlemen that would court me
Come while it is lucky !

Plop fall the plums ; there are still three.
Let any gentleman that would court me
Come before it is too late !

Plop fall the plums ; in shallow baskets we lay them.
Any gentleman who would court me
Had better speak while there is time.

ARTHUR WALEY,
translated from the Chinese

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argosy's Shakespeare award

£250 for the best original short story

WINNER: Moira Burgess
for her story FIRST NIGHT

Argosy is happy to announce that, by the unanimous vote of the Judges, a new young writer of twenty-eight receives the £250 Award for her outstandingly attractive and appealing story, which admirably meets the challenge of the Award. We give you comments from two of the Judges, both distinguished Shakespearian scholars.

JUDGES:

IVOR BROWN, C.B.E.
Governor, Royal Shakespeare Theatre

M. ST. CLARE BYRNE, O.B.E.
Governor, Royal Shakespeare Theatre

ANTHONY QUAYLE, C.B.E.
Director, Royal Shakespeare Theatre 1948-1956

JOHN NEVILLE
Theatre Director, Nottingham Playhouse

and the EDITOR of ARGOSY

From IVOR BROWN, C.B.E.

A certain amount is *certainly* known about the dates and movements in Shakespeare's life. Therefore it is reasonable to expect that stories based on that life should conform, at least roughly, to our knowledge of that particular time.

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I have been most impressed by *First Night*, by Moira Burgess. Its chronology is possible. *Hamlet* is usually put at 1600, and Shakespeare may have moved north across the river from his lodgings in Southwark by then. We know from the Mountjoy-Belott case, whose records were discovered by Professor Wallace, that Shakespeare was lodging with the Mountjoys round about 1604. The fact, as revealed in the Court record, was that Shakespeare testified to having " moved and persuaded " the marriage of Mary Mountjoy and Stephen Belott, Mountjoy's apprentice. The story suggests that Shakespeare had no regard for Belott and a great regard for Mary. But that is not a fatal bar to its possibility, since his love for her is made contemporary with the production of *Hamlet* in 1600, and the marriage did not take place till 1604. In affairs of the heart Shakespeare may have been a quick mover, and perhaps Belott, then seeming a lout in his eyes, may have improved.

This tale seemed to me well developed and told with a narrative swing which carries one along; it is well written, with vivid description of time, people, place, and of Shakespeare's feelings about *Hamlet* as a play. It is more workmanlike than the others, a complete thing and not a sketch. I therefore put it first.

From M. ST. CLARE BYRNE, O.B.E.

With a sound instinct for story-telling, Moira Burgess gives her events and the experiences of her characters a genuine setting in time and place. It was daring to use the first performance of *Hamlet*—best-loved, best-known of all the plays—for her central happening; but its familiarity gains the reader's confidence for her invention, so that he is the readier to follow her with interest and sympathy. She herself is happily at home with the background of Elizabethan London, so that she handles it tactfully, unobtrusively, and naturally. She has also a real gift for the visual moment, so that her pictures remain vividly alive in the mind's eye.

She writes simply and easily, without any affectations of style, and it is a pleasure to find a new, young writer who really *likes* people. Her heart warms to her characters and they rouse a corresponding warmth of sympathy in us. She has read her Shakespeare with a loving understanding which enables her, not unworthily, to suggest by the mingled vulnerability and strength of her young heroine, that in Mary Mountjoy there was perhaps a quality and a charm which were remembered and caught up into the making of a Perdita or a Marina.

We offer our congratulations to the Runners-up: Charity Blackstock, Elizabeth Lemarchand, John McGhee.

Honourable Mention: Phyllis Bentley, Elizabeth V. Casson, Daphne Castell, Ina M. Collier, Wallace Crawford, Ruth Drew, R. J. Fayers, E. L. Malpass, Hugh C. Rae.

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First Night

by Moira Burgess

WILL took his tankard of ale out to the back door and sat down gratefully on the wide cool step under the apple trees. It was only seven in the morning, but London was heavy with summer. He had sweated restlessly all night in his bedroom under the eaves; over on Bankside, the Globe Theatre must already be catching the sun. By afternoon the whole theatre, open to the brazen sky, would be simmering like a cauldron, the audience steaming hot and touchy as parakeets. It was no weather to put on a new play. They would be lucky to get off the stage alive.

Here in the north-facing garden of the house in Silver Street the grass was still netted with dew and the morning birds were singing. He leaned his head back against the doorpost and closed his eyes.

"Mother shouldn't have snapped at you like that, Mr. Shakespeare," said Mary at his side.

Will opened his eyes and smiled at her. She was perched like a starling on the top step, her long legs tucked up under the folds of her old dark-blue skirt. She had pulled open her collar for coolness, and pushed her sleeves above her angular young elbows, and knotted up her thistle-soft dark hair: she was seventeen, and careless as a little boy about the way she looked. She was shelling peas rapidly into a basin on her knee, without ever glancing at her hands: her large eyes, as dark a blue as her dress, were fixed on him.

"I don't mind," he said. "She has a headache today, hasn't she?"

"She always has," said Mary, "when father's away—on business," and she looked down suddenly, intent on her work. Under her fine pale skin a quick flush ran up to her lowered eyelids.

Will said, "Yes, I know." The frequent and dubious business

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trips of Mr. Mountjoy, his landlord, were no concern of his, nor did they shock him, but lately young Mary had begun to understand. Will watched the ebbing of her painful blush, and anger rose uselessly in his chest.

He raised his tankard and said, though it was not what he wanted to say: "I didn't mean to have this, but I was afraid your mother was going to crown me with the ale-jug."

Mary's serious little face flickered into a grin, but only for a moment. "You haven't eaten anything for days!" she said accusingly.

"Two days, that's all," Will said, "perhaps three."

"It's too long. And you've been drinking too much. And you haven't slept for three nights."

"It sounds as if you haven't either," said Will.

"Well, you've been tramping about upstairs till all hours!" But she was quick to see the alarm in his face. "No, I don't mean it. But you mustn't go on like this, you know."

Her earnest production of the parroted phrase made Will laugh. "I'm sorry. I think you should be able to sleep tonight."

"You too?"

"Yes, I hope so."

"Then it is the play that's worrying you," Mary said.

"That's it," said Will. He looked up into the apple boughs above the wavering line of the roof: the leaves were young and thickly clustered and a bright tender green. "It's the play."

"But you're always writing plays. Three or four since you came here. And you've never been as bad as this."

"This play is different," said Will.

"Your best yet?" said Mary cheekily.

Will grinned. "This time it really is."

"Oh, Will, can I see it? Can I come today?"

Will sat up with a jerk. "No, no," he said. "It isn't—you wouldn't—" He looked desperately around, and back at her sparkling young face. "Your father isn't here," he said, "and you know you can't go alone."

"But you could take me. You took us to *As You Like It*." Mary was breathless with eagerness. "Put me in the gallery, and I shan't stir till the end, and you can bring me straight home—"

"I can't," Will said. "I—I'm on in the first scene. And I'll have to be there early. I have armour to put on."

He remembered too late that Mary had a boy's enthusiasms.

"Oh, is there fighting? Is there a duel? Will, please take me—"

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Mrs. Mountjoy, from the doorway behind them, said sharply, "Are those peas shelled, Mary?"

"Not yet, Mother."

"Then finish them, please, and don't bother Mr. Shakespeare."

Mary slid a glance at Will under her long lashes; they had both noticed the stress on his surname. They sat in silence for a few moments.

"I did enjoy *As You Like It*," Mary said at last, demurely. "The boy who played Rosalind was so good."

"Sam? He's not bad." Will thought of the tall fair lad who was so oddly, gauchely charming in girls' rôles; and then suddenly he was seeing Sam not as Rosalind at all, but as the bewildered, innocent young heroine of the new play. He was back at the dress rehearsal; and that was what he had been trying to forget. Dick Burbage throwing a book at Sam, and Sam, highly strung and only thirteen, bursting into tears; John Heminge, the manager, with the worries of the whole company on his shoulders, soothing his temperamental star with one hand and comforting his most promising apprentice with the other; and Will himself watching the row with a cold sick feeling of responsibility, though no one appeared to be blaming him. Sam was a good boy, and Burbage was Burbage. If the play was too much for them, was it too much for anybody?

"Do they like dressing up as girls?" said Mary.

"What?" Will came back abruptly from the chaotic stage at the Globe to the quiet green garden. "The boys? Not much. Not at all, in this weather."

"Boys' clothes must be much more comfortable," said Mary dreamily.

Her mother appeared in the doorway again, her narrow face white, a deep double line of pain between her eyebrows.

"Mary, that's quite enough. Go up and call Stephen again. He should have been at work half an hour ago."

Mary, recognising a certain tone in her mother's voice, jumped up; Mrs. Mountjoy leaned against the doorpost and pushed back her hair with a floury hand.

"You shouldn't let Mary make a nuisance of herself, Mr. Shakespeare," she said. "I'm afraid she's very childish in some ways."

"I've two of my own at home," said Will with a laugh.

"Of course." Mrs. Mountjoy gave a strange impression of wanting to say something, but shying off each time she drew near the subject. "Though you don't look old enough to have daughters Mary's age, I've always said."

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"I married young," said Will warily.

"You must—" She paused: again it was as if she balked at the jump. "Your wife must miss you, now you're in London most of the year."

Will murmured a vague reply. When a landlady showed such interest in his home life, he had found it usually meant that her own was beset with problems—her children thought letting was common, or she needed the lodger's room for her aged mother-in-law—and the conversation was apt to end with the sincere hope that he would soon find somewhere else to stay. It would be a pity if that were in the wind; he liked the house in Silver Street. He sighed, and waited with resignation to hear what Mrs. Mountjoy had to say.

But Mrs. Mountjoy said nothing, and what she had not yet said hung heavily on the air. Mary's return, her dark skirts caught up in her hand as she ran downstairs, was something of a relief to them both.

"He's coming, Mother," she reported breathlessly. "He said he thought there was no hurry today."

Mrs. Mountjoy's lips tightened as she turned sharply back into the kitchen: Will watched dawning on Mary's too sensitive face, the understanding that she had been tactless. Stephen, the apprentice, was quite obviously taking advantage of his master's latest absence to be as lazy and idle as he possibly could, in the knowledge that no one would feel like calling him to account; Mary need not have said it aloud.

But she did see that to try to amend her clumsiness would make matters worse. She sat down again on the step and propped her chin on her hands. Gradually her worried brow cleared; she glanced sideways at Will again.

"It isn't very far to the theatre, is it?" she said.

"Far enough," said Will discouragingly.

"It didn't seem far when we went to *As You Like It*. If mother's head is better perhaps she'd come with me—"

"No," said Will. "It's not a play for you."

"But I saw *As You*—"

"This play," said Will, more definitely than before, "is different."

Mary's large puzzled eyes were fixed on his face: after a moment the quick delicate colour came to her cheeks again, but she did not look away. "But I'm nearly eighteen, Will."

"No, Mary."

He had meant that to be an unmistakable negative, but somehow it had not sounded right. Mary was still looking straight

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at him, her lips parted, her eyes like ink in their earnestness: one might drown in those eyes.

"I'm only a child," she said, almost under her breath. "That's what you mean, isn't it?"

"Caught you!" said a loud cheerful voice behind them.

Will started ridiculously, almost guiltily. Mary was startled too; it was a moment before she turned and looked up, her eyes narrowed in the sunlight, at the fat boy who stood in the doorway, scratching himself luxuriously.

"Good morning, Stephen," she said.

"Good afternoon," retorted Stephen, "why don't you say it?"

He guffawed at his own wit, stretched enormously, and transferred his scratching activity to his head, tight-curled as lambskin. His half-tied shirt gaped open, exposing the sandy hair on his plump pink chest. "It's a fine morning. Your dad still away?"

Mary nodded distantly.

"Pity," said Stephen, belching. "I've got through nearly all the work he left me. Only enough to keep me going till dinner-time." He winked a sleep-puffy eye at Mary, who turned her head away. "Roll on dinner-time."

"I suppose you want breakfast first," said Mrs. Mountjoy tartly behind him. "Go in and have your pasty. Mary, pour him some ale."

She stood breathing deeply of the warm scented air. If she had been white before, she was now positively green. She caught Will's eye and smiled thinly.

"You can't get good apprentices nowadays," she said.

Will shook his head. He wondered if she were going to faint.

"Though Stephen's a good worker when he likes." Beads of sweat were standing on her forehead; she pushed back her hair nervously and pressed her knuckles to her brow. "My husband thinks a lot of Stephen."

"Does he?" Will said, watching her convulsively moving throat.

"Yes. He—he'll make a good enough husband for Mary, when he's served his time—"

In her pain and misery she had taken at a stride the fence which had baffled her ten minutes ago. Will had hardly taken in her words when the nausea she was fighting swept clammily over her. She gulped, clapped her hands to her mouth, and turned blindly into the kitchen. Will jumped to his feet shouting, "Mary!" but Mary had already banged down the ale-jug.

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and gone to her mother. Stephen, carrying his pasty and tankard, hurriedly came out into the garden, and he and Will stood for a few moments in male helplessness.

"Sick headache," said Stephen comfortably, returning to his half-eaten pasty. Will looked at his champing jaws with distaste. Mary and this lout? No, Stephen was only a boy, he was bound to improve; and Mary was seventeen, of course. Her time was past for sitting on the doorstep chattering to the lodger; clearly Mrs. Mountjoy thought so, and that was why she had spoken now, with the shadow of a warning behind her words. But she had no need to warn Will. Mary had been a little girl when he had first known her, and he had always thought of her as a little girl, until this moment.

"You can come back now," said Mary's cool little voice.

As she stood above them on the steps, rather pale herself after her unpleasant job, Will looked at her as if he had never seen her before. Her poised young head on its long neck was like a daffodil, a swan. He could see her as a bride, tall as a candle-flame among her maids; and the bridegroom would be Stephen. His mind flinched from that.

"How—how is she?" he said.

"It's just one of her sick turns." Mary pushed back her silk-fine hair, unconsciously echoing her mother's gesture. "She'll be sick again, probably. Then I'll give her a sleeping-draught and she'll sleep till evening." She smiled faintly at Will's worried face. "It's all right. It's happened before. I know what to do."

"But you'll be alone all day." Will came up the steps to stand beside her, and jerked his head towards the inattentive Stephen, who was back in the kitchen foraging for more pasties. "He wouldn't be much use if—if you needed help."

"I shan't. Don't worry, Will. You've got your play to think of."

"Perhaps I could—"

He had never in all his working life felt so disinclined to go to the theatre. Someone else could take his part. Instead of the petty hell of the Globe, the back-stage snapping and cursing, the hot restless crowd in the pit, there would be a long day in the cool house and the tree-shaded garden, with Mary.

"No, you couldn't. I wouldn't let you," said Mary. She put out her hand and very gently touched his cheek. "But thank you, love," she said.

He looked back from the garden gate. She was still standing in the doorway, a tall girl, slim, fragile even in appearance, with steel in her delicate bones. He could see her now as a wife,

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brave as a falcon, true as a sword, a mate for a king or a warrior. But not for Stephen, never for Stephen.

He saluted her, his other hand on the latch of the gate. She raised a hand to wave. The cool green garden held her like a pearl in a shell.

He went out into London, to the play.

THE fur-trimmed gown that was the Ghost's second costume was very little cooler, in the stifling afternoon, than the armour of the early scenes. Will was streaming with sweat when he came off stage; he threw the heavy garment across a bench and ripped his soaked shirt open at the neck. The tiring-house, stuffy and electric with the tenseness of a first performance, shook oddly before his eyes. Out on the stage he could hear Dick Burbage's voice in passionate career; then the Queen, brokenly, "O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain." Will grinned exhaustedly. So far, not bad; whether anyone understood it or not.

He picked up a towel and went over to the open back door of the theatre, mopping his sweaty face and neck. The blazing heat outside struck him between the eyes. The sun, blindingly bright in a deep empty sky, seemed to be drawing from Bankside, as a poultice draws dirt, all the stench and clamour and spurious brilliance ingrained in the messy streets. The very trees here were limp and brassy with dust. Cows and children and dogs jostled in the gutters; draggle-tailed women and down-at-heel men, gaudy in the rags of finery, slouched on ramshackle doorsteps and leaned from precarious windows. This was his London, the vital boisterous pulsing town which he loved; but London stretched beyond the teeming Bankside. North of the river, close under London Wall, it embraced the green trees of Silver Street, and the cool house, and Mary.

"God, what weather," said John Heminge at his elbow. He was a heavily-built man, not young, and dusty now, having just been dragged unceremoniously off stage in the person of the murdered Polonius. He picked up someone's abandoned tankard of ale, took a mighty pull, and wiped his sleeve across his mouth, sighing.

"Plague weather," said Will. "They'll be closing us down if this goes on."

"And it's only June!" Plague in August was a normal hazard of a theatre manager's life, Heminge seemed to imply, but how could one budget for plague in June? "Never mind.

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We'll make enough off this to carry us over. You're a good boy, Will."

"I'm glad you think so," said Will absently, his eyes on the seething street outside. (Her mother would be asleep. She would be sitting under the trees in the garden, reading or sewing. Alone? Or with Stephen?)

"Think?" said Heminge. "Don't you like the play?"

Will rubbed the back of his hand over his clammy forehead, and reached wordlessly for Heminge's tankard. The ale tasted sour; he remembered fleetingly that he had not eaten for two days.

"I'm not pleased with it, John," he said. "I don't think it's finished."

"Well, this is a fine time to tell me," said Heminge, a tinge of impatience in his kindly voice. "You've only been writing it for a year and a half."

"I know, but—" Will sought for words, his brows drawn together: Heminge glanced at him sharply. He knew the signs of a compulsive worrier. He had seen them before in Will.

"You've never been pleased with any of your plays, have you?" he said gently. "And they've all gone perfectly well."

Will closed his eyes wearily against the relentless sun. "Yes, but the other plays were all finished when we put them on. They—they'd been born, they could stand on their own. I could watch them, even the first performance, and it didn't hurt. I had finished with them." He opened his eyes and stared dully into Heminge's worried, uncomprehending face. He said, "But this one, it's still part of me. Seeing it put on is as bad as writing it again; like giving birth—"

He stopped; sweat was running down his white face.

"Are you feeling all right, Will?" said Heminge tentatively. "You've been working hard. Why don't you go home—"

He paused, alarmed at the spasm of pain which seemed to clutch Will at his words; and in that moment, like a stiff sea-breeze, Dick Burbage came striding off stage and over to the open door.

"For God's sake, give me a drink," he said and, grabbing the third-hand tankard from Will, drank lustily. Every inch of his short sturdy body seemed to be sparking with energy, with the strange essential force that made him the greatest actor in his world; he was entirely professional and completely self-centred. In the golden blaze of his confidence and power, Will and Heminge drew deep breaths and glanced sheepishly at one another.

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"What's the matter with you anyway, Will?" demanded Burbage, sinking on to the doorstep with a cat's relaxed grace. "You look like death dug up."

"He says the play isn't finished," said Heminge drily.

Burbage grinned. "I don't see how the hell it could be any more finished," he said. "You've killed off the whole cast as it is."

He slumped back against the doorpost, basking like a lizard, apparently asleep; he would be up with the whip of a rapier when his actor's sixth sense gave him the cue. Will, looking down at him, smiled faintly.

"I think I'll go round to the front," he said. "Somebody's got to throw eggs at Dick."

He had felt it to be a good audience when he was on stage. As he slipped out by the tiring-house door and walked round the outside of the theatre, he knew it to be a superlatively good audience: there was scarcely a sound from the house, not a rustle, not a cough. It was eerie to walk round the great building and know that its silence held hundreds of people. It was no less eerie to think that it was he, Will Shakespeare, outside the wall, unseen, unheard, who had them in his power.

"With a little help from Burbage," said Will to himself drily as he reached the entrance door.

The gatekeeper, tiptoe on a stool to have a better view of the stage, never noticed him slipping in at the back of the yard, where the groundlings were packed like herring in a barrel. It was far from easy to find standing room, and once you had found it, there you stood for the rest of the play. Will jammed himself in between two fat women eating nuts.

For a moment the action on the stage had slackened, and he could look round his fellow groundlings, who were the most important people in the world. The well-off citizens up in the balconies came to be seen as much as to see, but on this motley crew in the pit the play's life depended, and they were giving it a fair hearing. The soldier at Will's shoulder had a bottle of ale in his hand and a girl in his arm, but his eyes were fixed on the stage. The greasy oyster-wife over there, eating an apple, stood with her mouth ajar, forgetting to chew. Just beyond, a tall slim young lad turned his head as far as it would stretch to follow the blameless Ophelia. Something about the yearning line of the boy's throat and cheek—his face was averted—struck a chord of recognition in Will's mind; but the crowd shifted and came between them, and the thought was lost in his concentration on the mood of these people who would make or break his play.

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And he felt the audience answer to his touch like a tuned violin. Shocked into stillness by Ophelia's madness, they wept at her drowning; they were laughing next moment through their tears at the gravediggers' quibbles. The chill finger of death touched them as her lonely coffin was borne across the stage. "This is I, Hamlet the Dane."—cried Dick Burbage, and leapt into her open grave: a single gasp of horror choked in a thousand throats. The pale boy whom Will felt he knew clasped both hands to his mouth in an oddly womanish gesture; but there were tough cockneys biting their nails.

Will stood among them, feeling them swung to laughter and sorrow by his play, his touch on the string: the theatre swam away from his dizzy eyes: for a brief moment he was a god. It could be only for a moment. He was back in the stifling, sweating, rapt audience at the Globe, and the crowd had shifted once more to give him a clear view of that tall effeminate boy; and it was not a boy: it was Mary Mountjoy.

Will blinked his smarting eyes to scatter the sunbright mirage. But it was Mary, a graceful thin boy in Stephen's old doublet and hose: Rosalind herself, after all that talk about *As You Like It* at breakfast. She was being jostled by a spotty apprentice on one side and nudged by a fat seaman on the other: Will in alarm made an effort to reach her, but the people in between resisted strongly, resenting the interruption. She heard the slight scuffle and turned: her eyes met Will's, and she smiled.

There was neither shame nor bravado in her smile. It was more as if she had seen his anxiety for her, and was reassuring him. It was a tender smile, a loving one, Will might have thought; but that was too unlikely, from a tomboy of seventeen. It was so unlikely that, jammed in the swaying crowd, he felt his head spin and for a moment lost touch with reality altogether.

Then he felt a quick movement shiver through the audience, a pressing forward and standing on tiptoe, as they realised what was going to happen. The arrangements for the duel had taken their evil course. Hamlet—even Will no longer thought of him as Burbage—was going unsuspecting at last to betrayal and death: the whole world hung on the kiss and clash of two rapiers, one honest, one deadly. The first hit, the second, the treacherous lunge, the bright blood on Hamlet's sleeve: a woman gave a stifled moan.

The pace of disaster quickened: Laertes fell, and the Queen: "Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane," grated between Hamlet's teeth, and the King died like a dog. And Hamlet, in bitter triumph, was sinking to his knees . . . And now

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there was nothing but the waste, and the loss, and the piercing pity of it all. There was not a sound in the theatre, from gallery to ground, but Horatio's gentle voice: "... And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

Then the drum broke in with its blessedly commonplace rat-a-tat-tat; Fortinbras and his men swung on to the stage; and Will with a painful jerk came back to life. Tears were streaming down his face. All round him women were sobbing and men scrubbing sleeves over their eyes. On stage, Fortinbras and Horatio spoke their final lines, vaguely heard, almost unheeded. The wings of the angel of death were still beating in the air.

Will turned and forced his way through the crowd, past the transfixed gatekeeper: the heat struck him, and he staggered and walked blindly on. Behind him, the cannons sounded their solemn note, and there was a moment's utter silence. The roar of the crowd, when it came, beat about his head with physical force. He did not know whether it was sound or sunlight.

What had he done? He had written plays before, and moved crowds to pity as well as to laughter: but he had not until now had a theatre in tears. He? It was not he who had done that. It was the play, this strange difficult play, at last alive with a life he had never given it: for he, who had written it, had also felt the world stand still as Hamlet died.

He stumbled on through the baking streets. Hat and doublet were back in the tiring-house, and the sun beat on his head and neck, but he did not feel it. His mind was a whirl of words. *I am but mad nor'-nor'-west— Art thou there, truepenny? —Armed at points exactly, cap-a-pe . . .*

He was loping along Bankside; why did people turn and stare at him? Someone was running with him, that was why: it seemed to be the tall slim boy he had half recognised in the theatre: but then it also seemed to be Mary Mountjoy, and that was not very likely.

"Will, Will, please stop, I can't keep up—"

It was Mary's voice, but there were so many voices in his head: Horatio's, the Ghost's, Hamlet's, which were all his own voice after all . . . *O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else? And shall I couple hell? . . .*

"Please, Will—"

If it were Mary, she was almost crying now as she stumbled along beside him; but it was not Mary, it was a boy in doublet and hose that did not seem to fit very well. He did not remember swerving in his course, but here was the bridge with its crowded

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high houses and the swift river below. O God! God! *Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled . . . To die, to sleep . . . In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed . . . To a nunnery, go . . .*

"Don't you know me, Will? It's Mary . . . I had to see the play—"

The trees in Silver Street spread their kindly fingers between him and the brazen sun. He did not know what he wanted, but he knew he would find it here, in the green garden, in the cool house. The ring-bolt twisted in his clumsy fingers; the door swung open . . . *Nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remembered . . .*

The house was silent; no one in the hall, in the abandoned kitchen; no one in the cool stone-flagged passage. But the boy from the theatre had come in with him, panting and flushed from the crazy run through the broiling streets, and stood before him in the open garden door.

"It's Mary, my darling."

That was only another of the voices: but the boy had pulled off his cap, and the dark hair that had been bundled up all afternoon fell softly to his shoulders. There was a mist of green and a filigree of sunlight, and, framed in the doorway, Ophelia, or Rosalind, or Mary with her eyes full of tears and her straight fine hair blowing across her desperate, loving face.

"O rose of May," he said, as she took him in her arms.

THE leafy branches across the window were dark against a silver sky. A waking bird, somewhere in the garden, sang a phrase of chilly music. Will turned over and murmured, still half asleep, a girl's name.

The bird sang again, and another joined it, and another tentatively chirping. He stretched luxuriously in the cool bed. He had slept so well, a dreamless healing sleep: for weeks now, since the play had taken hold of him, the dawn chorus instead of waking him had been lulling him into an uneasy doze. Had he gone early to bed last night? He could not remember that, nor how he had spent the evening. He had a dim memory of strain and overpowering heat, and some great emotion: fear, or joy, or pity, or love? He knew only that he had desperately wanted comfort, and that he had found it in the arms of the woman who lay beside him now. He turned his head on the pillow and looked into Mary's dark blue eyes.

The shock that ran through him was physical: he thought she must have felt it too. It left him sweating, yet cold as a corpse.

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He drew away from her, staring as though she were a stranger: if only she had been!

"What is it, my darling?" she said.

Her dark hair that was usually pinned up under her cap was drifted on the pillow, but her eyes, alarmed now as she sat up, were clear and honest and pure as they had been yesterday morning. Yesterday she had been the one pure thing in the hot weary town, a star among the swirling fog. Today there was nothing, anywhere, but fog.

He said, out of the dull horror that made him feel sick, "Last night—did I—?"

"Don't you remember?" she said.

He brought up his hands and pressed the palms to his eyes, as if to force them to see. He said, "I don't remember. Mary, was I drunk? Was I mad? Mary, you must believe me; I don't remember."

She lay still for a long time. She said, "It was so hot, you had been working too hard, not eating, not sleeping. And then the play . . . It was a brainstorm, I think."

He had been mad, then, and attacked her, overpowered her: he buried his face in the pillow.

Mary's voice above him shook with unshed tears: after a moment he raised his head and saw the pure line of her cheek that he had recognised in the theatre. As then, her face was half turned away. She said, "When we came up here . . . I heard Mother beginning to wake next door. I couldn't go to her in Stephen's clothes. I put on my smock." She paused and he saw her throat convulse: nothing of this he remembered. She said, very low, "I gave her another sleeping draught."

He saw tears form in her wide eyes and begin to well out over her cheeks. He said again, "I swear, Mary, I can't remember—"

She turned her head towards him. The tears were running down her face. She said, "When I came back, you were asleep. You slept all night long, my darling, you never stirred. I thought you were dead."

He lay so still he might have been asleep again, in that exhausted, beaten sleep. He cast his mind back, forcing it into the lost paths of the night. He thought he remembered the blessed comfort, the warmth, the tender love that had held him all night; but perhaps he was remembering his mother's breast.

"That was all?" he said at last.

Mary nodded. "That was all," she said.

Relief washed over him and left him shaky and sick and clean. He rolled over and thrust himself out of bed and went to the

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window. Below in the nacreous dawn light the garden was colourless, frosted with gossamer, crystal with birdsong: but the sun was rising and it would all be green again, and cool, and pure. He had not plucked the rose, after all. He had not quenched the star.

He turned at a sound behind him: Mary, her face hidden in the pillow, was weeping desperately, almost silently, her whole thin body shaking to the wrenching sobs.

" Mary," he said. " Mary . . . You did say . . . It's all right? "

Her nod was unmistakable, but the tears still came, running down her face, soaking into the pillow. He sat down on the bed and touched her agonised shoulders.

" Then don't cry, my love," he said, " why are you crying? "

She sobbed something into the fists clenched childishly against her teeth. He thought she said, " That's why . . ." He could not make sense of that.

His hand moved gently, comfortingly, stroking her tousled dark head. She was only a child, after all.

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He may have a real wife . . . somewhere

IN THE SUN

BY ELIZABETH TAYLOR

"OH, heavens!" said Deirdre Wallace, stepping out of the car with some of her Moroccan trophies—a water-carrier's hat from Marrakesh hanging on a string from her wrist, a native basket, and an ugly, stamped-leather bag.

Her husband, Bunny, snatched at a crumpled chiffon scarf as it loosened from her shoulders in the wind from the sea. He was a soldierly-looking little man, with receding hair; had gone bald very early; now was in his fifties. *So English*, the other visitors at the hotel would be bound to say—not only because of his clothes, but on account of every stalwart movement he made.

Deirdre, before stepping into the coolness of the hotel, looked about her in dismay. She preferred something more Arab—an old Sultan's palace, for instance; or some ancient house inside a medina, with broken mosaics, and wrought-iron lanterns casting fancy patterns on the walls. So far, she had had an instinct for finding such places. This hotel looked like being their first mistake.

Beyond a bougainvillaea hedge, people were actually playing tennis in this broiling sun. Scarlet Thames-Valley geraniums bordered the drive—though more brilliant than any in England, and exuberantly climbing the trunks of trees.

Driving through the town, Deirdre had remarked how very much it was in the style of the departed French, with its boulevards, rond-points, shuttered villas named Le Mimosa, Les Rosiers, La Terrasse. There were more bicycles than in Oxford, where the Wallaces lived.

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Arab women in djibbahs and yashmaks looked absurd riding them, Deirdre thought.

Despite the palmery near which it was built, the new white hotel looked very European. " It might be anywhere in the world," Deirdre complained, " from Nice to the Bahamas—or Torquay."

Beside a peacock-blue swimming-pool, sunbathers were spread out like starfish on brightly-cushioned furniture. Limbs stirred occasionally, but hardly a word was spoken. One lone swimmer stood as if bemused on the diving-board, then suddenly flung himself with a deep, crashing sound into the water. The shock of this interruption subsided into peaceful blowing noises, gentle splashes, as the swimmer surfaced, shook the bright water from his face and then, as if once more bemused, began to swim slowly, aimlessly about the pool. No one opened an eye to look at him.

A porter, wearing a somewhat fancy-dress version of Moorish costume, took their suitcases to the lift. A man and woman, in beach clothes, carrying sunbathing paraphernalia stepped out of it. " English," Deirdre murmured to Bunny, as they stood side by side in the lift, ascending.

Bunny was secretly, guiltily, a little glad to see someone from his own country. His French was not as good as Deirdre's, and he spoke it and listened to it under a sense of strain. It would be a relief to chat in his own language—in the bar before dinner, perhaps.

" Very luxe," Deirdre said, but not in a tone of satisfaction, as she glanced about the large, cool bedroom. Bunny wound up the shutters and stepped on to the balcony. The pool, with its coloured umbrellas was below him. No one was swimming now, but wet footprints round the edges were drying quickly. They vanished one after the other on the hot concrete.

The English couple were arranging themselves ready for their afternoon's sunbathing. They removed their wraps and lay back in their deckchairs—a stout pair, already well on with their tanning. The sun beat down. Arabs, at this time of the day, were squatting in the shade, or safely indoors.

While she was waiting for Bunny to change into his swimming-trunks, Deirdre wandered out into the stone-paved corridor, moving slowly along from window to window, looking at the distant hills, the pink and paprika landscape. The heat seemed to move, to rise and fall, making the dusty air whirl giddily.

A commotion beneath one of the windows made her lean out. A smell of rotting fruit rose from below. This was the back of the

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hotel and a rough road ran close to it, leading to the cemetery. As she leaned out of the window, Deirdre could see beneath her a swarm of children picking over a cart of refuse, disturbing the flies. The sight of this sickened her. Oh, it is quite upsetting, she told herself. Especially was she moved by one little girl standing apart from the others, tearing pieces off a crust of bread. She was barefooted as they all were, but wore a crumpled party dress of violet-coloured velvet. This, too, had probably come off a rubbish cart, Deirdre thought. It was threadbare, like some old banner hanging in a chapel.

" It was so upsetting," she told Bunny as they went down in the lift. " The back of the hotel might be in a different sphere from the front."

The company about the swimming pool was still somnolent. The large couple they had seen in the lift had been joined now by two other people—a man and a woman—and a lazy conversation had begun.

Deirdre took Bunny's wrap and went to sit in the shade under a blue umbrella. Very smartly, Bunny stepped on to the diving-board, sprang outwards and did a belly-flop into the still water. The French visitors cried out with goodnatured shouts of anguish. Most of the English pretended that nothing had happened. Bunny came up through the water with a crimson chest. Deirdre blushed.

The Troughtons and the Crouches had struck up a desultory holiday friendship. They chatted when they met about the hotel, and joined one another for drinks before dinner, but did not yet go on expeditions together. The Troughtons, for that matter, very rarely went on expeditions. They had come here to get a tan, and seriously developed it from breakfast until the moment when the sun suddenly dropped out of the sky at six o'clock.

" Yes, they were getting into the lift as we got out," Mrs. Troughton told Mrs. Crouch, who had turned her attention to the newcomers on the other side of the pool. " So English," she murmured. " Simply couldn't be anything else."

Bunny flailed about in the water—a splashy, disorganised crawl—and Deirdre sat under the umbrella in her white blouse, her flowered dirndl skirt—a book in her hands, which she read with so little attention that she had not turned a page. Her fond, dreamy gaze was more often upon Bunny. Admiringly, she watched him quietly floating on his back, the little hairy patch on his chest exposed to the sun, his eyes closed.

When at last he came out of the water, Deirdre handed him his robe. Something about her devoted attitude irritated Mrs.

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Crouch. She doubted if they were married to one another, she said; but Mrs. Troughton could not think why else they would be on holiday together.

Other people greatly engaged Mrs. Crouch, and her husband shared her interest—a rather unmannish trait, Mrs. Troughton thought. Her own husband was not, on holiday, interested in anything. Separated from the Stock market, his mind became a vacuum. A paperbacked thriller was part of his sunbathing equipment, but he had not so far opened it. His hands were always covered with sun-tan oil and for much of the time he dozed.

" Doesn't she remind you of Miss Simpson, Daddy? " Mrs. Crouch suggested to her husband, gazing across the pool at Deirdre Wallace.

"*He* reminds me of someone," Mrs. Troughton said, thinking what awful company one sometimes fell in with on holiday—and often, through proximity and one's tolerant holiday spirit, became quite absorbed in their lives. " Someone I've seen somewhere or seen a photograph of," she added.

" Miss Simpson was Janice's music mistress," Mrs. Crouch explained. No need to explain who Janice was. The Troughtons knew all about Janice, who was training to be a nurse. They knew about the hospital, too—the Matron, Sisters, patients. Mrs. Troughton thought she could find her way blindfold about it . . . poor staff nurse found crying in the sluice; old Mr. Norwich's registrar kicking up a rumpus in Casualty. She would also be quite at home in sister Carol's office, and in their house, or home—as Mrs. Crouch always called it—in Guildford, with its frilled nylon curtains at seven-and-elevenpence a yard; its sun-lounge and bar—quilted plastic décor done by Mr. Crouch, *Leslie* . . . *Daddy* . . . himself.

Well, they were a nice homeloving pair, Mrs. Troughton thought, though this *Daddy* business grated rather. The world would be better with more such peaceable, easily-pleased creatures in it.

" Don't you think so, *Daddy*? The image of Miss Simpson."

He looked at Deirdre over the top of his spectacles and agreed. Part of Brenda's unflagging interest in other people was to be constantly finding likenesses between them. She had at the very beginning—last Saturday—decided that Ralph Troughton was a younger, shorter General de Gaulle, and that his Peggy might have been an identical twin to their doctor's wife back home.

That was how Mrs. Crouch had introduced herself to them, sitting at the bar before dinner. " Oh, you must think me terribly rude," she said. " I just found myself staring at you. It quite took

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my breath away when you walked in. You're so like our doctor's wife back home—we live in Guildford—I thought for a moment . . ."

Mrs. Troughton was easy, benign, friendly. She smiled. Here we go, she thought. It will be like those Tillotsons in Majorca and the funny couple in Corfu. She was quite prepared to be genial for a fortnight. Her placid disposition was never disturbed by other people. At home, in London, she protected Ralph from such intrusions; on holiday it was unnecessary, he was not really there.

Mr. Troughton now stirred himself, slapped a fly away from his ankle, got stiffly up and stretched. " Time for a drink," he said. " Last dip," he added. He had few words to spare.

He dived in expertly from the side of the pool, swam powerfully across it, and hauled himself out. The others, feeling rather dazed and enervated from the sun, began to collect their belongings.

After dinner, the Wallaces drank coffee in the hotel courtyard. Light fell from wrought-iron lanterns and printed scrolled shadows on the white walls around them, together with the shadows of giant leaves. A fountain dribbled water back into a pool. An orange dropped from a tree.

Next to them at dinner sat a young American and his Moroccan wife—perhaps on their honeymoon, it was thought. Deirdre had been amused by his inadequacy and dependence. His wife dealt deftly with every situation, speaking in Arabic, French or Spanish. She was as curt with waiters, as Deirdre had earlier watched her being with the rug-sellers and beggars who hung about the entrance to the hotel. Her shift was of a pale lime-green silk and clung to her, showing her beautiful, wide-apart breasts.

Now she and her husband were sitting across the courtyard, under a climbing rose tree. She was feeding a thin grey cat with popcorn. Deirdre, who loved cats, had tried to make this one come to her, but it had edged away at her touch. The popcorn made it thirsty, and it kept pattering off to the fountain pool in the middle of the courtyard to have a drink. A boy had hosed the paving-stones. Although they had dried at once, there was still the delicious smell of wet stone.

Deirdre refilled Bunny's coffee-cup and then sat back. He was glancing too often at the young Moroccan woman, almost staring at her at the moment, and to underline his inattention, Deirdre twisted her fingers in her lap and looked fixedly down at them. The message was received. With a little start of confusion, Bunny said, " I was just remembering when you had a dress that colour."

" What colour? " asked Deirdre glancing round the courtyard.

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" That yellowish green."

" When? "

" Oh, I can't remember. Probably years ago."

" Not that colour, I'm quite sure. It wouldn't suit me in the least."

" Oh well . . ." he said vaguely, taking up his coffee-cup, his eyes anywhere but on that lime-green dress under the roses.

" But," she persisted, " what on earth was it like? "

He regretted mentioning it. He had made a mistake, and she was beginning to think it was some other woman's dress he had remembered. It had been a difficult evening.

In the bar before dinner, she had looked huffily at the other visitors as if cross with them for being English; then had turned away to chat in French with the Arab barman. " Until we reached here, we hadn't seen a single English person since we left Ouezzane."

When they reached home after their holidays, she liked to tell people that hardly a word of English had offended their ears from start to finish. Now she would not be able to—for she would not exaggerate, or tell a lie.

Bunny had smiled and said good evening when Ralph Troughton had come into the bar, and Ralph had nodded back quite genially, settling himself on a high stool and helping himself to olives. It was soon plain however that Deirdre was annoying him, monopolising the attentions of the barman, as she was asking him what was the Arabic for peanuts, for cherries, for everything she could see around her.

" Large scotch," said Ralph Troughton, when he could get a word in.

Deirdre turned her eyes to him, and then away.

It was always the same, Bunny thought wistfully, and without bitterness. She drove people from him, shooed them off, as if he were private ground. Sometimes he longed to have a conversation with someone else, another man—this one drinking whisky, for instance.

At dinner, they had found themselves sitting next to the Crouches. The Troughtons, earlier established in the hotel, had a table by the verandah overlooking the swimming-pool and beyond that the dark seashore.

Deirdre recognised Mrs. Crouch as the one who had stared so much at them that afternoon, had been talking about them, had murmured to her companions, Deirdre thought, when poor Bunny had done his belly-flop. To punish her, when she was overheard remarking to her husband how strange it seemed that the

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scarecrows in the fields should be dressed as Arabs, Deirdre put her tongue in her cheek and smiled, giving a glance under her lids at Bunny.

The food was extremely boring, but Mrs. Crouch was either hungry or easily pleased. That her chop should be tender was enough for her, and several times she told her husband how tender it was.

"Do you remember the tajine de poulet aux amandes in Fez?" Deirdre asked Bunny, leaving most of her own chop, putting her knife and fork together. He could see that she had taken a great dislike to Mrs. Crouch.

Now, sitting in the courtyard, listening to nightingales, looking through leaves at the stars—for safety, they both felt tired; tired by one another. Deirdre was exhausted by trying to interest him and keep him happy, trying, in fact, to make up for all the rest of the world; to be a world in herself.

"Shall we hire a calèche and drive round for a bit?" Bunny suggested. The Crouches and the Troughtons had come out into the courtyard, and were settling down at a nearby table. He had written them off. They were not for him.

"Oh, I should love to," said Deirdre. She seemed in ecstasies at the idea and hurried upstairs to select one of her many stoles.

The air was beautifully soft and smelt of orange blossom, as they drove in the calèche down the boulevard, across the rond-point and into the old part of the town. Under the walls, by one of the gates into the medina, a circle of men were sitting on the ground, wrapped round in their djibbahs, listening to an old man who was reading to them from a large book. Light from a paraffin flare waved over the pages, over their intent faces. They were absorbed, like children, and did not lift their eyes to Deirdre and Bunny jolting by in their calèche.

"It is so beautiful," whispered Deirdre, taking Bunny's hand.

They drove round the walls, and when they came back past the gateway, the circle of Arabs had broken up; the men were dispersing in silence, going their own ways thoughtfully, through the quiet streets, still under the spell of what they had heard.

"It is what we came to see," Deirdre said, with a sweep of her hand at the white walls, beyond them the tower of a mosque topped with a stork's nest. "Not that boring new hotel, not all those tiresome English people. We can have plenty of them at home."

Yet don't, thought Bunny sadly . . .

It was becoming colder and the fronds of the trees in the palmery clashed softly together. Moonlight was enough to read

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by. It blanched Deirdre's face as she lifted it to look at the stars, it glinted on some metal threads woven into her stole.

The streets were quiet. The only sound was of the horse's hoofs on the road, the creaking of the calèche, and then, as they drew near, dance music coming from the hotel.

The Troughtons and the Crouches were just setting out for a stroll before bed. They felt drowsy from the day's sun and non-exertion.

As they went down the steps of the hotel, they saw Bunny helping Deirdre from the calèche . . . her radiant smile as she took his hand.

"*Of course* they aren't married," Mrs. Crouch murmured as she and Mrs. Troughton fell into step together.

" I'd like to go in one of those, Ralph," Mrs. Troughton said, over her shoulder. But she didn't suppose they'd ever bother . . .

Peggy Troughton sat up in bed and drank her coffee, croissant crumbs scattered on her sunburnt chest.

"And his name is Bunny. Isn't that wonderful? " she asked her husband, who was pottering about, getting into his swimming-trunks and sandals, ready for the day's lying-out in the sun. He was rather irritable in the mornings when he was on holiday, having slept most of the day and, so, badly at night.

" What do you think he does? " Peggy Troughton went on.

" Does? What do you mean *does*?"

" I think he travels in lingerie. Or he might own a launderette. It's obvious that *she* has the money, don't you think? "

" What money? "

" Well, for this sort of holiday, for instance, and all those moonstones and seed pearls and garnets that she wears in the evening."

" Poor sod, whatever he does," Ralph said. He found Deirdre's airs and graces intolerable. Her pale blue eyes, baby hair, and crushed scarves irritated him. Not that she ever talked to him, but she talked *at* him.

" Very henpecked," Peggy agreed. " His accent isn't quite right. A bit too much of a good thing."

She put her breakfast tray aside and got heavily out of bed. When she had pulled off her nightgown she stood in front of the long mirror, turned round slowly, trying to look over her fat shoulders at her sunburnt back. Between the top of her thighs and the lower part of her breasts her flesh was as white as lard.

" Ralph, I'm not peeling, am I? Don't tell me I'm peeling. I am itching all down my spine."

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He came across the room and peered at her, as if he were making up his mind about a joint of meat, not looking at a woman, his wife. The red skin across her shoulders was puckered and creased from the crushed-up nightgown.

"Looks a bit angry," he said. "I should give your back a rest today."

But she could not bear to waste a whole day—and what else was there to do?

Going into the bathroom, she said, "And the way she drags him off to those mosques. And all that shopping, and going into those smelly souks."

It was another world that these Europeans briefly made—nothing to do with the country they were in, and little to do with the one from which they had come. Everything was centred on the sun cult and its rituals—the oiling, the turning, the rules for exposure and non-exposure, the setbacks—particularly blisters—the whole absorbing process.

They were mostly middle-aged married people who lolled about the swimming-pool all day. The young French girls—the bikini brigade, as Leslie Crouch called them—went to the shore and lay about on the sands where a group of straw umbrellas was planted above tide level.

Deirdre was rather relieved when Bunny decided to swim in the sea for a change. There he would have to wade out and she would be spared the anxiety of the dive in.

She went with him, taking her book. She would not bathe herself. The last time she had put on a swimsuit, she had felt absurd, too thin—not the kind of thinness of the young bikini girls, but a wide flatness which looked ridiculous or pathetic; her skin, which never tanned, looked almost mauve. She suffered, deprived of her floating stoles, her floppy hats.

On their way, they passed Mr. and Mrs. Troughton. She was oiling his back, finishing with an affectionate little pat. Then, sternly turbanned and wearing her sunglasses, she opened a book and began to read to him. She had pulled down the straps of her sunsuit and all that showed of her large bosom was reddish brown. The morning air smelt heavily of sun-tan oil.

"A very large lobster," Deirdre whispered to Bunny when they had passed by. "She only needs a dollop of mayonnaise."

They made their way through some dusty oleanders, across the shore road and on to the beach. When they had taken off their sandals, their feet sank deeply into the sharp, hot sand. They plodded slowly through it down towards the water's edge.

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Bunny's forehead was peeling, so he wore a white jockey cap with a long peak. As he strutted, very upright, arms swinging, on the hard ribbed sand they had come to, he resembled some kind of bird. Deirdre thought Mrs. Troughton had looked amused as they passed by, but it was difficult to be sure. Sunglasses take so much expression from the face.

" People come out here," said Deirdre, glaring at the bodies about her, " and bake themselves all day, only glad if they can go back home the colour that they punish other people for being."

" So true," said Bunny.

Without discussing where they should sit, they moved apart from the others and spread towels out on the sand. Bunny removed his hat and shirt, and went trotting down to the sea, his crooked arms jerking back and forth like a long-distance runner's.

Languid, shallow waves came in, gathering little crests of foam, spilling over and fanning out on the sands. After quite a long time, Deirdre could still see Bunny wading out, not even knee-deep in the water.

Quite close to where Deirdre sat guarding his towel and shirt, two young girls came and flopped down on the sand. They were smoothly brown, slim-waisted. One had a pale appendicectomy scar showing above the little triangle of bikini. She rolled her almost bare, oiled body over to switch on her transistor set and a French song blared out.

Not entirely because of this, Deirdre gathered up her things and moved away into the shade beneath an umbrella. She sat there primly, reading; sometimes glancing at the sea, her shiny, white legs tucked under her flowered skirt. When she saw Bunny coming out of the water, she stood up and waved to him. He altered his course and came towards the umbrella.

" Some shade," she explained, handing him his towel. " And that awful transistor set. They oughtn't to be allowed."

He patted his wet, sunburnt face with the towel, glanced towards the two girls, and then quickly back at Deirdre. " You look very pretty sitting under this umbrella," he said. " I wish I had brought the camera."

On Friday it was their last evening. The Crouches and the Troughtons were leaving too, and seemed to be in an especially festive mood. Trying to make less of their jollity, Deirdre worked hard at her own. She was animated, smiling at Bunny and raising her wine glass to her lips, as if at some deep and secret

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understanding between them. She gave her dazzled attention to every word he said—as if his fascination for her was endless.

"What can she see in him?" Mrs. Crouch asked her husband, exasperated by curiosity.

"Or *he* in *her*?"

"No, but I mean, to keep it up like this? She must be very new to the game. Don't tell me any woman can find her husband as enthralling as that all the time. Or any man his wife, for that matter. Well, the novelty has to wear off."

"I can't see why she has to try so hard. Don't look now. She just tapped him on the hand as if he'd said something risqué. Naughty, naughty."

"Perhaps she has to try so hard because they're not married. She may be in a very insecure position. He may have a real wife somewhere."

"We shall never know."

"Well, they've kept themselves to themselves so much," Mrs. Crouch complained, taking her husband's arm.

soon in

argosy

Michael Gilbert
Darrell Bates
HARRY MARK PETRAKIS
Ray Bradbury
Edith Pargeter
Stephen Barr

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" *She's* kept *him to herself.*"

When they had had coffee in the courtyard, Deirdre went upstairs to tidy her hair. The hotel lounge was being arranged for dancing, the chairs pushed back and the rugs rolled up.

She did her hair, put on an extra necklace, then went out on to the balcony, feeling suddenly limp, headachy. The dance band had begun to play. From below, she could hear the rhythmic beat which depressed her and made her feel nervy.

She wished that the evening was over, or that they might go away from the hotel on another drive in a calèche—just quiet—and she and Bunny on their own ; but she had not liked to suggest it.

At last, she went downstairs, and rather selfconsciously made her way to the lounge. Bunny was dancing with the American's Moroccan bride, who was again wearing the lime-green shift. He looked miserable and embarrassed when he saw Deirdre hesitating by the door, seemed to be trying to send a message to her, as if to say, with his anxious expression, *Wait, I shall come to you as soon as ever I can.*

But she did not wait. She turned and went out into the deserted courtyard and sat down, shivering, beside the fountain. Bunny found her there, nursing the little grey cat, for warmth, and consolation.

" Did you *see* her face? " Mrs. Crouch asked her husband, as they reversed nattily out of the way of the large bulldozing Troughtons. " He's obviously not allowed to dance with other women."

" Certainly not with the second most beautiful woman in the room," said Mr. Crouch, gazing down at Brenda's faded hair . . .

" I couldn't avoid it," said Bunny.

" Avoid what? " asked Deirdre faintly.

" He came up to me at the bar and insisted on buying me a drink. She was with him. We stood chatting. They are on their honeymoon. Then the band struck up. He said he didn't dance."

The fountain dribbled. A nightingale was singing. She lifted the cat and kissed its fur.

" It was the least I could do," he went on. He could not say how grateful he had been for someone else to have spoken to him at last.

" Will you come and dance with me? " he asked.

" I'd rather not."

" To please me," he implored.

Carefully she put the cat down, brushed her lap and went before him to the lounge.

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Bunny was quite deft at all the old-fashioned dances. Deirdre was taken into his arms as if into a stranger's embrace. She had no sense of rhythm. Stiffly she shuffled, stumbled, blushed. He smiled gallantly and held her tighter, guiding her as adroitly as he could.

To make up for everything, she smiled. She smiled until her cheeks ached. Then she whispered, " After this, can we go for a walk? "

On the next day, on Saturday, the new, pale intake from the north began to arrive. The porter kept bringing down luggage for departing guests and piling it up in the hall—suitcases, and other loot such as camel saddles, rolled-up rugs and brass trays.

The Crouches and Troughtons came in from their last sunbathe, and there were the Wallaces in the hall, ready to depart. At this moment, the American came leaping up the steps with an armful of lilies, and just as Deirdre was going through the hall door he put them into her arms and said, with the most beautiful smile, " In homage! "

Mrs. Troughton took off her sunglasses and stared at him. He had gone down the steps and opened the car door for her, and Bunny wrote something on a piece of paper and handed it through the window.

" In *homage*! " Mrs. Crouch repeated unbelievingly.

None of them had talked to the American before. His honeymoon state seemed to have insulated him; but when he came back into the hotel, Mrs. Crouch could not contain herself. " Everyone departing," she said dramatically, throwing wide her arms. "After lunch, we're off ourselves."

" I hope you have a good trip," he said politely. He was still holding the piece of paper in his hand.

" Kind regards, Gerald Wallace, Morocco '64," Mrs. Troughton, a little behind him, read.

" For my young brother," he said, waving the paper. " Sure he'll be thrilled. I nerved myself last night and introduced myself. Maybe he gets tired of that, but he was pleasant all right, very pleasant."

" Gerald Wallace," Mrs. Crouch said faintly. " But how did you know? "

" Well, there's the face in the photographs, and the name."

" *Gerald Wallace!* " Mrs. Troughton said, when the American had left them. " Well, really! That Bunny business put us off the scent. To think that Ralph's been reading his book all the holiday—carrying it around, anyway! Where is it, my love? "

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She took the paperback and looked at the photograph on the cover.

"That must have been taken at least fifteen years ago. All that hair! Well, who would have thought it. How can that man have recognised him?"

"Well, he did," said Mrs. Crouch rather snappily. This was the nearest she had ever been to a celebrity, and she had let him slip through her fingers . . .

At lunch—since it could not now create a precedent—the Crouches were invited to join the Troughtons at their table.

They could talk of nothing else. "I wish I'd asked for his autograph," said Mrs. Crouch, the most incredulous of them all. "Oh, the girls would have been fascinated, intrigued. Of course, Janice has got Sir Malcolm Sargent, you know. I could kick myself."

"It's awfully odd, really," said Mrs. Troughton. "Such a mild, henpecked little man, writing all those exotic stories."

"How does he get off the chain to find out about the underworld—all that violence?" asked Ralph Troughton.

"To think it's the last meal," said his wife, gazing out of the window at the familiar scene, so soon to be a thing of the past.

"All those spies and loose women, Buenos Aires and those sorts of places. Casablanca, Monte Carlo."

"We didn't get to Casablanca after all, Ralph," said Mrs. Troughton.

"International harlots," said Mrs. Crouch, flushing with excitement.

"The last dates," said her husband, taking a few.

"Well, we have tripped up," his wife said, in a more resigned voice. Then, as if suddenly she couldn't get home fast enough, she put down her napkin and asked, "Have we time for coffee?"

She was back in Guildford in her mind, all the tiresome travelling suddenly over, and she was saying to the girls, and her daily help, and her friends at the bridge club, "Now you'll never guess who we met on holiday. Staying in the hotel." They would never guess, and when they were told, they would crowd in with questions that she would be able to answer.

"Now you've got our address," she said to the Troughtons. "And we shall never forgive you if you don't drop in any time you're in Guildford."

Mrs. Troughton let it go. Dreamily, she peeled an orange—knew that she was unlikely to be in Guildford, whereas everybody was in London at some time or another—especially in the part in which she and Ralph had their flat.

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The Crouches went upstairs to finish packing, and Mrs. Troughton smiled at her husband as if to say, " What odd people! But it's over now." They would certainly go out to see them off in the car, before they got ready to leave themselves; but really the Crouches had already changed into shades—like the Tillotsons in Majorca and those people whose name they had forgotten in Corfu.

Guildford was gloomy, an anticlimax. The sun-lounge was dark and the large windows streaming with rain. The girls were glad to see their parents, and they listened dutifully—even appreciatively—to the holiday stories. A most united family.

The very next morning, after their homecoming, Mrs. Crouch went out to the public library to look up Gerald Wallace in Who's Who: WALLACE, Gerald. *author; b.* 3 *July* 1912. Looked older, thought Mrs. Crouch. What a long list of books! European War—despatches three times. Who would have thought it? We were as wrong as could be, Mrs. Crouch decided, peering at the rather small print, her finger underlining it. So very wrong. It was twenty-seven years ago that he had married Deirdre Imogen Burnett—his one and only wife.

Mrs. Crouch left the library, put up her umbrella and picked her way through the streets to the coffee shop.

" Goodness, how brown you are! " her friends said enviously, who were waiting for her among the horse-brasses and copper warming-pans.

" Did you have a marvellous time? " they asked.

She sat down and drew off her gloves, smiling as if to herself; then she raised her head and looked round the table at her friends' pale faces and, " Guess," she began, " guess who . . ."

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Elizabeth Taylor grew up in an atmosphere steeped in books and writing. She left school to become a librarian, later married and then published her first book. Most unassuming, this publicity-shy author communicates brilliantly through her characters.

With the publication this month of her latest book, The Soul of Kindness, she adds to her long list of short stories and novels, some of which have been translated into six languages.

Argosy cover illustration for her delightful story is by Jon Davis.

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LAKE N'YANZA

BY SAMUEL BAKER

The source of the Nile was a mystery which fascinated nineteenth-century explorers, and there can never have been a more lively and lion-hearted adventurer than Samuel Baker who, a hundred years ago, set out with his beautiful young wife to discover the source of the Nile. In this extract from his book, The Albert N'yanza, Baker describes how they left the villainous chief Kamrasi, and embarked on the last lap of their pilgrimage.

THE day of starting at length arrived; the chief and guide appeared, and we were led to the Kafoor river, where canoes were in readiness to transport us to the south side. This was to our old quarters on the marsh! The direct course to the lake was west, and I fully expected some deception, as it was impossible to trust Kamrasi.

I complained to the guide, and insisted on his pointing out the direction of the lake, which he did, in its real position, west; but he explained that we must follow the south bank of the Kafoor river for some days, as there was an impassable morass that precluded a direct course. This did not appear satisfactory, and the whole affair looked suspicious, as we had formerly been deceived by being led across the river in the same spot, and not allowed to return.

We were now led along the banks of the Kafoor for about a mile, until we arrived at a cluster of huts; here we were to wait for Kamrasi who had promised to take leave of us.

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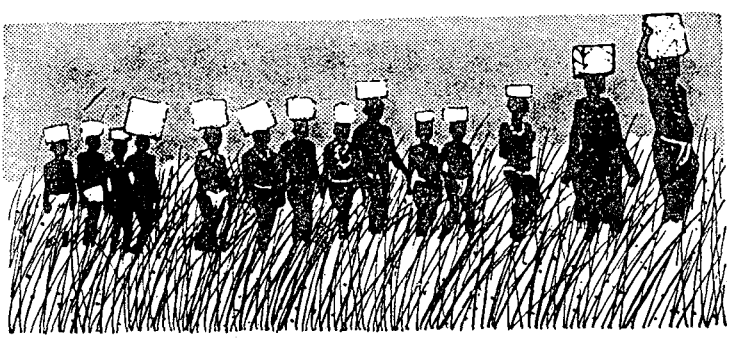
The sun was overpowering, and we dismounted from our oxen and took shelter in a blacksmith's shed. In about an hour Kamrasi arrived, attended by a considerable number of men, and took his seat in our shed. I felt convinced that his visit was simply intended to peel the last skin from the onion. I had already given him nearly all that I had, but he hoped to extract the whole before I should depart.

He almost immediately commenced the conversation by asking for a pretty yellow muslin Turkish handkerchief fringed with silver drops that Mrs. Baker wore upon her head: one of these had already been given to him, and I explained that this was the last remaining, and that she required it . . . He "must" have it . . . It was given. He then demanded other handkerchiefs. We had literally nothing but a few most ragged towels; he would accept no excuse, and insisted upon a portmanteau being unpacked, that he might satisfy himself by actual inspection. The luggage, all ready for the journey, had to be unstrapped and examined, and the rags were displayed in succession; but so wretched and uninviting was the exhibition of the family linen, that he simply returned them, and said "they did not suit him."

Beads he must have, or I was "his enemy." A selection of the best opal beads was immediately given him. I rose from the stone upon which I was sitting, and declared that we must start immediately.

"Don't be in a hurry," he replied, "you have plenty of time; but you have not given me that watch you promised me." This was my only watch that he had begged for, and had been refused every day during my stay at M'rooli. So pertinacious a beggar I had never seen . . .

I repeated to him the arrangement for the journey that he had promised, begging him not to deceive me, as my wife and I



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should both die if we were compelled to remain another year in this country by losing the annual boats in Gondokoro. The understanding was this: he was to give me porters to the lake, where I was to be furnished with canoes to take me to Magungo. From Magungo, canoes should take me down river, and porters should carry my effects from the nearest point to Shooa . . . Should he be faithful to this engagement, I trusted to procure porters from Shooa, and to reach Gondokoro in time . . .

In our present weak state another year of Central Africa without quinine appeared to warrant death; it was a race against time, all was untrodden ground before us, and the distance quite uncertain. I trembled for my wife, and weighed the risk of another year in this horrible country should we lose the boats. With the self-sacrificing devotion that she had shown in every trial, she implored me not to think of any risks on her account, but to push forward and discover the lake.

I now requested Kamrasi to allow us to take leave, as we had not an hour to lose. In the coolest manner he replied, " I will send you to the lake and to Shooa, as I have promised; but, *you must leave your wife with me!*"

At that moment we were surrounded by a great number of natives, and my suspicions of treachery at having been led across the Kafoor river appeared confirmed by this insolent demand. If this were to be the end of the expedition I resolved that it should also be the end of Kamrasi, and, drawing my revolver quietly, I held it within two feet of his chest, and looking at him with undisguised contempt, I told him, that if I touched the trigger, not all his men could save him: and that if he dared to repeat the insult I would shoot him on the spot. At the same time I explained to him that in my country such insolence would entail bloodshed, and that I looked upon him as an ignorant ox who knew no better, and that this excuse alone could save him.

My wife, naturally indignant, had risen from her seat, and maddened with the excitement of the moment, she made him a little speech in Arabic (not a word of which he understood), with a countenance almost as amiable as the head of Medusa. Altogether the *mise en scène* utterly astonished him; the woman Bacheeta, although savage, had appropriated the insult to her mistress, and she also fearlessly let fly at Kamrasi, translating as nearly as she could the complimentary address that " Medusa " has just delivered.

Whether this little *coup de théâtre* had so impressed Kamrasi with British female independence that he wished to be off his

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bargain, I cannot say, but with an air of complete astonishment he said, "Don't be angry! I had no intention of offending you by asking for your wife; I will give you a wife, if you want one, and I thought you might have no objection to give me yours; it is my custom to give my visitors pretty wives, and I thought you might exchange. Don't make a fuss about it; if you don't like it, there's an end of it; I will never mention it again."

This very practical apology I received very sternly, and merely insisted upon starting. He seemed rather confused at having committed himself, and to make amends he called his people and ordered them to carry our loads. His men ordered a number of women who had assembled out of curiosity, to shoulder the luggage and to carry it to the next village where they would be relieved. I assisted my wife upon her ox, and with a very cold adieu to Kamrasi, I turned my back most gladly on M'rooli.

The country was a vast flat of grassland interspersed with small villages and patches of sweet potatoes; these were very inferior owing to the want of drainage. For about two miles we continued on the bank of the Kafoor river; the women who carried the luggage were straggling in disorder, and my few men were much scattered in their endeavours to collect them.

We approached a considerable village; but just as we were nearing it, out rushed about six hundred men with lances and shields, screaming and yelling like so many demons. For the moment, I thought it was an attack, but almost immediately I noticed that women and children were mingled with the men. My men had not taken so cool a view of the excited throng that was now approaching us at full speed, brandishing their spears, and engaging with each other in mock combat.

"There's a fight! there's a fight!" my men exclaimed; "we are attacked! fire at them, Hawaga." However, in a few seconds, I persuaded them that it was a mere parade, and that there was no danger.

With a rush, like a cloud of locusts, the natives closed around us, dancing, gesticulating, and yelling before my ox, feinting to attack us with spears and shields, then engaging in sham fights with each other, and behaving like so many madmen. A very tall chief accompanied them; and one of their men was suddenly knocked down, and attacked by the crowd with sticks and lances, and lay on the ground covered with blood; what his offence had been I did not hear.

The entire crowd was most grotesquely got up, being dressed in either leopard or white monkey skins, with cows' tails strapped

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on behind, and antelopes' horns fitted upon their heads, while their chins were ornamented with false beards, made of the bushy ends of cows' tails sewed together. Altogether, I never saw a more unearthly set of creatures; they were perfect illustrations of my childish ideas of devils—horns, tails, and all, excepting the hoofs; they were our escort! furnished by Kamrasi to accompany us to the lake. Fortunately for all parties the Turks were not with us on that occasion, or the satanic escort would certainly have been received with a volley when they so rashly advanced to compliment us by their absurd performances.

We marched till 7 p.m. over flat, uninteresting country, and then halted at a miserable village which the people had deserted, as they expected our arrival. The following morning I found much difficulty in getting our escort together, as they had been foraging throughout the neighbourhood; these "devil's own" were a portion of Kamrasi's troops, who considered themselves entitled to plunder *ad libitum* throughout the march; however, after some delay, they collected, and their tall chief approached me, and begged that a gun might be fired as a curiosity.

The escort had crowded around us, and as the boy Saat was close to me, I ordered him to fire his gun. This was Saat's greatest delight, and bang went one barrel unexpectedly close to the tall chief's ear.

The effect was charming. The tall chief, thinking himself injured, clasped his head with both hands, and bolted through the crowd, which, struck with a sudden panic, rushed away in all directions, the "devil's own" tumbling over each other, and utterly scattered by the second barrel which Saat exultingly fired in derision as Kamrasi's warlike regiment dissolved before a sound. I felt sure, that in the event of a fight, one scream from our "baby" gun with its charge of forty small bullets, would win the battle, if well delivered into a crowd of Kamrasi's troops.

That afternoon, after a march through a most beautiful forest of large mimosa in full blossom, we arrived at the morass that had necessitated this great *détour* from our direct course to the lake. It was nearly three-quarters of a mile broad, and so deep, that in many places the oxen were obliged to swim; both Mrs. Baker and I were carried across on our angareps by twelve men with the greatest difficulty; the guide, who waded before us to show the way, suddenly disappeared in a deep hole, and his bundle that he had carried on his head, being of light substance, was seen floating like a buoy upon the surface; after a thorough sousing, the guide reappeared, and scrambled out, and we made a circuit, the men toiling frequently up to their necks through

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mud and water. On arrival at the opposite side we continued through the same beautiful forest, and slept that night at a deserted village, M'Bazé. I obtained two observations; one of Capella, giving lat. 1° 24′ 47″ N. and of Canopus 1° 23′ 29″.

The next day we were much annoyed by our native escort; instead of attending to us, they employed their time in capering and dancing about, screaming, and gesticulating, and suddenly rushing off in advance whenever we approached a village, which they plundered before we could arrive. In this manner every place was stripped; nor could we procure anything to eat unless by purchasing it for beads from the native escort. We slept at Karché, lat. 1° 19′ 31″ N.

We were both ill, but were obliged to ride through the hottest hours of the sun, as our followers were never ready to start at an early hour in the morning. The native escort were perfectly independent, and so utterly wild and savage in their manner, that they appeared more dangerous than the general inhabitants of the country. My wife was extremely anxious, since the occasion of Kamrasi's "proposal," as she was suspicious that so large an escort as three hundred men had been given for some treacherous purpose, and that I should perhaps be waylaid to enable them to steal her for the king. I had not the slightest fear of such an occurrence, as sentries were always on guard during the night and I was well prepared during the day.

On the following morning we had the usual difficulty in collecting porters, those of the preceding day having absconded, and others were recruited from distant villages by the native escort, who enjoyed the excuse of hunting for porters, as it gave them an opportunity of foraging throughout the neighbourhood. During this time we had to wait until the sun was high; and we thus lost the cool hours of morning and increased our fatigue.

Having at length started, we arrived in the afternoon at the Kafoor river, at a bend from the south where it was necessary to cross over in our westerly course. The stream was in the centre of a marsh, and although deep, it was so covered with thickly-matted water-grass and other aquatic plants, that a natural floating-bridge was established by a carpet of weeds about two feet thick: upon this waving and unsteady surface the men ran quickly across, sinking merely to the ankles, although beneath the tough vegetation there was deep water.

It was equally impossible to ride or to be carried over this treacherous surface; thus I led the way, and begged Mrs. Baker to follow me on foot as quickly as possible, precisely in my track.

The river was about eighty yards wide, and I had scarcely

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completed a fourth of the distance and looked back to see if my wife followed close to me, when I was horrified to see her standing in one spot and sinking gradually through the weeds, while her face was distorted and perfectly purple.

Almost as soon as I perceived her, she fell, as though shot dead. In an instant I was by her side: and with the assistance of eight or ten of my men, who were fortunately close to me, I dragged her like a corpse through the yielding vegetation, and up to our waists we scrambled across to the other side, just keeping her head above the water: to have carried her would have been impossible, as we should all have sunk together through the weeds. I laid her under a tree, and bathed her head and face with water, as for the moment I thought she had fainted; but she lay perfectly insensible as though dead, with teeth and hands firmly clenched, and her eyes open, but fixed. It was a *coup de soleil*.

Many of the porters had gone on ahead with the baggage; and I started off a man in haste to recall an angarep upon which to carry her, and also for a bag with a change of clothes, as we had dragged her through the river. It was in vain that I rubbed her heart, and the black women rubbed her feet, to endeavour to restore animation. At length the litter came, and after changing her clothes, she was carried mournfully forward as a corpse. Constantly we had to halt and support her head, as a painful rattling in the throat betokened suffocation. At length we reached a village, and halted for the night.

I laid her carefully in a miserable hut, and watched beside her. I opened her clenched teeth with a small wooden wedge, and inserted a wet rag, upon which I dropped water to moisten her tongue, which was dry as fur. The unfeeling brutes that composed the native escort were yelling and dancing as though all were well; and I ordered their chief at once to return with them to Kamrasi, as I would travel with them no longer. At first they refused to return; until at length I vowed that I would fire into them should they accompany us on the following morning.

Day broke, and it was a relief to have got rid of the brutal escort. They had departed, and I had now my own men, and the guides supplied by Kamrasi.

There was nothing to eat in this spot. My wife had never stirred since she fell by the *coup de soleil*, and merely respired about five times in a minute. It was impossible to remain; the people would have starved. She was laid gently upon her litter, and we started forward on our funeral course. I was ill and

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broken-hearted, and I followed by her side through the long day's march over wild parklands and streams, with thick forest and deep marshy bottoms; over undulating hills, and through valleys of tall papyrus rushes, which, as we brushed through them on our melancholy way, waved over the litter like the black plumes of a hearse.

We halted at a village, and again the night was passed in watching. I was wet, and coated with mud from the swampy marsh, and shivered with ague; but the cold within was greater than all. No change had taken place; she had never moved.

I had plenty of fat, and I made four balls of about half a pound, each of which would burn for three hours. A piece of a broken water-jar formed a lamp, several pieces of rag serving for wicks. So in solitude the still calm night passed away as I sat by her side and watched. In the drawn and distorted features that lay before me I could hardly trace the same face that for years had been my comfort through all the difficulties and dangers of my path. Was she to die? Was so terrible a sacrifice to be the result of my selfish exile?

Again the night passed away. Once more the march. Though weak and ill, and for two nights without a moment's sleep, I felt no fatigue, but mechanically followed by the side of the litter as though in a dream. The same wild country diversified with marsh and forest. Again we halted.

The night came, and I sat by her side in a miserable hut, with the feeble lamp flickering while she lay, as in death. She had never moved a muscle since she fell. My people slept. I was alone, and no sound broke the stillness of the night. The ears ached at the utter silence, till the sudden wild cry of a hyena made me shudder as the horrible thought rushed through my brain, that, should she be buried in this lonely spot, the hyena would . . . disturb her rest.

The morning was not far distant; it was past four o'clock. I had passed the night in replacing wet cloths upon her head and moistening her lips, as she lay apparently lifeless upon her litter. I could do nothing more; in solitude and abject misery in that dark hour, in a country of savage heathens, thousands of miles away from a Christian land, I beseeched an aid above all human, trusting alone to Him.

The morning broke; my lamp had just burnt out, and, cramped with the night's watching, I rose from my low seat, and seeing that she lay in the same unaltered state, I went to the door of the hut to breathe one gasp of the fresh morning air. I was watching the first red streak that heralded the rising sun, when

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I was startled by the words, "Thank God," faintly uttered behind me. Suddenly she had awoke from her torpor, and with a heart overflowing I went to her bedside. Her eyes were full of madness! She spoke, but the brain was gone!

I will not inflict a description of the terrible trial of seven days of brain fever, with its attendant horrors. The rain poured in torrents, and day after day we were forced to travel for want of provisions, not being able to remain in one position.

Every now and then we shot a few guinea-fowl, but rarely; there was no game, although the country was most favourable. In the forests we procured wild honey, but the deserted villages contained no supplies, as we were on the frontier of Uganda, and M'tesé's people had plundered the district.

For seven days I had not slept, and although as weak as a reed, I had marched by the side of her litter. Nature could resist no longer. We reached a village one evening; she had been in violent convulsions successively—it was all but over. I laid her down on her litter within a hut; covered her with a Scotch plaid, and I fell upon my mat insensible, worn out with sorrow and fatigue. My men put a new handle to the pickaxe that evening, and sought for a dry spot to dig her grave!

THE sun had risen when I woke. I had slept, and, horrified as the idea flashed upon me that she must be dead, and that I had not been with her, I started up.

She lay upon her bed, pale as marble, and with that calm serenity that the features assume when the cares of life no longer act upon the mind, and the body rests in death. The dreadful thought bowed me down; but as I gazed upon her in fear, her chest gently heaved, not with the convulsive throbs of fever, but naturally. She was asleep; and when at a sudden noise she opened her eyes, they were calm and clear. She was saved! When not a ray of hope remained, God alone knows what helped us. The gratitude of that moment I will not attempt to describe.

Fortunately there were many fowls in this village; we found several nests of fresh eggs in the straw which littered the hut; these were most acceptable after our hard fare, and produced a good supply of soup.

Having rested for two days, we again moved forward, Mrs. Baker being carried on a litter. We now continued on elevated ground, on the north side of a valley running from west to east, about sixteen miles broad, and exceedingly swampy.

The rocks composing the ridge upon which we travelled due west were all gneiss and quartz, with occasional breaks, forming

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narrow valleys, all of which were swamps choked with immense papyrus rushes, that made the march very fatiguing. In one of these muddy bottoms one of my riding oxen that was ill, stuck fast, and we were obliged to abandon it, intending to send a number of natives to drag it out with ropes. On arrival at a village, our guide started about fifty men for this purpose, while we continued our journey.

That evening we reached a village belonging to a headman, and very superior to most that we had passed on the route from M'rooli: large sugar-canes of the blue variety were growing in the fields, and I had seen coffee growing wild in the forest in the vicinity.

I was sitting at the door of the hut about two hours after sunset, smoking a pipe of excellent tobacco, when I suddenly heard a great singing in chorus advancing rapidly from a distance towards the entrance of the courtyard. At first I imagined that the natives intended dancing, which was an infliction that I wished to avoid, as I was tired and feverish; but in a few minutes the boy Saat introduced a headman, who told me that the riding ox had died in the swamp where he had stuck fast in the morning, and that the natives had brought his body to me.

"What!" I replied, "brought his body, the entire ox, to me?"

"The entire ox as he died is delivered at your door," answered the headman; "I could not allow any of your property to be lost upon the road. Had the body of the ox not been delivered to you, we might have been suspected of having stolen it."

I went to the entrance of the courtyard, and amidst a crowd of natives I found the entire ox exactly as he had died. They had carried him about eight miles on a litter, which they had constructed of two immensely long posts with cross-pieces of bamboo, upon which they had laid the body. They would not eat the flesh, and seemed quite disgusted at the idea, as they replied that "it had died."

It is a curious distinction of the Unyoro people, that they are peculiarly clean feeders, and will not touch either the flesh of animals that have died, neither of those that are sick; nor will they eat the crocodile. They asked for no remuneration for bringing their heavy load so great a distance, and they departed in good humour as a matter of course.

Never were such contradictory people as these creatures; they had troubled us dreadfully during the journey, as they would suddenly exclaim against the weight of their loads, and throw them down, and bolt into the high grass; yet now they had of

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their own free will delivered to me a whole dead ox from a distance of eight miles, precisely as though it had been an object of the greatest value.

The name of this village was Parkāni. For several days past our guides had told us that we were very near to the lake, and we were now assured that we should reach it on the morrow. I had noticed a lofty range of mountains at an immense distance west, and I had imagined that the lake lay on the other side of this chain; but I was now informed that those mountains formed the western frontier of the M'wootan N'zigé, and that the lake was actually within a march of Parkāni. I could not believe it possible that we were so near the object of our search. The guide Rabonga now appeared, and declared that if we started early on the following morning, we should be able to wash in the lake by noon!

That night I hardly slept. For years I had striven to reach "the sources of the Nile." In my nightly dreams during that arduous voyage I had always failed, but after so much hard work and perseverance the cup was at my very lips, and I was to *drink* at the mysterious fountain before another sun should set—at that great reservoir of Nature that ever since creation had baffled all discovery.

I had hoped, and prayed, and striven through all kinds of difficulties, in sickness, starvation, and fatigue, to reach that hidden source; and when it had appeared impossible, we had both determined to die upon the road rather than return defeated. Was it possible that it was so near, and that tomorrow we could say, "the work is accomplished?"

The 14th March (1864). The sun had not risen when I was spurring my ox after the guide, who, having been promised a double handful of beads on arrival at the lake, had caught the enthusiasm of the moment. The day broke beautifully clear, and having crossed a deep valley between the hills, we toiled up the opposite slope.

I hurried to the summit. The glory of our prize burst suddenly upon me!

There, like a sea of quicksilver, lay far beneath the grand expanse of water—a boundless sea horizon on the south and south west, glittering in the noon-day sun; and on the west, at fifty or sixty miles' distance, blue mountains rose from the bosom of the lake to a height of about 7,000 feet above its level.

It is impossible to describe the triumph of that moment—here

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was the reward for all our labour—for the years of tenacity with which we had toiled through Africa. England had won the sources of the Nile!

Long before I reached this spot, I had arranged to give three cheers with all our men in the English style in honour of the discovery, but now that I looked down upon the great inland sea lying nestled in the very heart of Africa, and thought how vainly mankind had sought these sources throughout so many ages, and reflected that I had been the humble instrument permitted to unravel this portion of the great mystery when so many greater than I had failed, I felt too serious to vent my feelings in vain cheers for victory, and I sincerely thanked God for having guided and supported us through all dangers to the good end. I was about 1,500 feet above the lake, and I looked down from the steep granite cliff upon those welcome waters—upon that vast reservoir which nourished Egypt and brought fertility where all was wilderness—upon that great source so long hidden from mankind; that source of bounty and of blessings to millions of human beings; and as one of the greatest objects in nature, I determined to honour it with a great name.

As an imperishable memorial of one loved and mourned by our gracious Queen and deplored by every Englishman, I called this great lake "the Albert N'yanza." The Victoria and the Albert lakes are the two sources of the Nile.

LA VIE EN ROSE

My Paris is a land where twilight days
Merge into violent nights of black and gold;
Where, it may be, the flower of dawn is cold:
Ah, but the gold nights, and the scented ways!

A little nose curved softly, like a shell,
Eyelids of women, little curls of hair,
A red mouth like a wound, a mocking veil:
Phantoms, before the dawn, how phantom-fair!

And every woman with beseeching eyes,
Or with enticing eyes, or amorous,
Offers herself, a rose, and craves of us
A rose's place among our memories.

ARTHUR SYMONS,
Paris

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A MOVEABLE FEAST

MORE EXTRACTS FROM THE NEW ERNEST HEMINGWAY

IT was a lovely evening and I had worked hard all day and left the flat over the sawmill and walked out through the courtyard with the stacked lumber, closed the door, crossed the street and went into the back door of the bakery that fronted on the boulevard Montparnasse and out through the good bread-smells of the ovens and the shop to the street. The lights were on in the bakery and outside it was the end of the day and I walked in the early dusk up the street and stopped outside the terrace of the Nègre de Toulouse restaurant where our red-and-white checkered napkins were in the wooden napkin rings in the napkin rack waiting for us to come to dinner.

I read the menu mimeographed in purple ink and saw that the *plat du jour* was cassoulet. It made me hungry to read the name.

M. Lavigne, the proprietor, asked me how my work had gone and I said it had gone very well. He said he had seen me working on the terrace of the Closerie des Lilas early in the morning but he had not spoken to me because I was so occupied.

" You had the air of a man alone in the jungle," he said.

" I am like a blind pig when I work."

" But were you not in the jungle, monsieur? "

" In the bush," I said.

I went on up the street looking in the windows and happy with the spring evening and the people coming past. In the three principal cafés I saw people that I knew by sight and others that I knew to speak to. But there were always much nicer-looking people that I did not know that, in the evening with the lights just coming on, were hurrying to some place to drink together, to eat together and then to make love.

The people in the principal cafés might do the same thing or they might just sit and drink and talk and love to be seen by

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others. The people that I liked and had not met went to the big cafés because they were lost in them and no one noticed them and they could be alone in them and be together. The big cafés were cheap then, too, and all had good beer and the apéritifs cost reasonable prices that were clearly marked on the saucers that were served with them.

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On this evening I was thinking these wholesome but not original thoughts and feeling extraordinarily virtuous because I had worked well and hard on a day when I had wanted to go out to the races very badly. But at this time I could not afford to go to the races, even though there was money to be made there if you worked at it. It was before the days of saliva tests and other methods of detecting artificially encouraged horses, and doping was very extensively practised. But handicapping beasts that are receiving stimulants, and detecting the symptoms in the paddock and acting on your perceptions, which sometimes bordered on the extra-sensory, then backing them with money you cannot afford to lose, is not the way for a young man supporting a wife and child to get ahead in the full-time job of learning to write prose.

By any standards we were still very poor and I still made such small economies as saying that I had been asked out for lunch and then spending two hours walking in the Luxembourg Gardens and coming back to describe the marvellous lunch to my wife. When you are twenty-five and are a natural heavyweight, missing a meal makes you very hungry. But it also sharpens all of your perceptions, and I found that many of the people I wrote about had very strong appetites and a great taste and desire for food, and most of them were looking forward to having a drink.

At the Nègre de Toulouse we drank the good Cahors wine from the quarter, the half or the full carafe, usually diluting it about one-third with water. At home, over the sawmill, we had a Corsican wine that had great authority and a low price. It was a very Corsican wine and you could dilute it by half with water and still receive its message. In Paris, then, you could live very well on almost nothing and by skipping meals occasionally and never buying any new clothes, you could save and have luxuries.

Coming back from the Select now I had sheered off at the sight of Harold Stearns who I knew would want to talk horses, those animals I was thinking of righteously and light-heartedly as the beasts that I had just forsworn. Full of my evening virtue I passed the collection of inmates at the Rotonde and, scorning vice and the collective instinct, crossed the boulevard to the Dôme. The Dôme was crowded too, but there were people there who had worked.

There were models who had worked and there were painters who had worked until the light was gone and there were writers

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who had finished a day's work for better or for worse, and there were drinkers and characters, some of whom I knew and some that were only decoration.

I went over and sat down at a table with Pascin and two models who were sisters. Pascin had waved to me while I had stood on the sidewalk on the rue Delambre side wondering whether to stop and have a drink or not. Pascin was a very good painter and he was drunk; steady, purposefully drunk and making good sense. The two models were young and pretty. One was very dark, small, beautifully built, with a falsely fragile depravity. The other was childlike and dull but very pretty in a perishable childish way. She was not as well built as her sister, but neither was anyone else that spring.

"The good and the bad sisters," Pascin said. "I have money. What will you drink?"

"Une demie-blonde," I said to the waiter.

"Have a whisky. I have money."

"I like beer."

"If you really liked beer, you'd be at Lipp's. I suppose you've been working."

"Yes."

"It goes?"

"I hope so."

"Good. I'm glad. And everything still tastes good?"

"Yes."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-five."

"Do you want to bang her?" He looked towards the dark sister and smiled. "She needs it."

"You probably banged her enough today."

She smiled at me with her lips open. "He's wicked," she said. "But he's nice."

"You can take her over to the studio."

"Don't make piggishness," the blonde sister said.

"Who spoke to you?" Pascin asked her.

"Nobody. But I said it."

"Let's be comfortable," Pascin said. "The serious young writer and the friendly wise old painter and the two beautiful young girls with all of life before them."

We sat there and the girls sipped at their drinks and Pascin drank another fine à l'eau and I drank the beer; but no one was comfortable except Pascin. The dark girl was restless and she sat on display, turning her profile and letting the light strike the concave planes of her face and showing me her breasts under

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the hold of the black sweater. Her hair was cropped short and was sleek and dark as an oriental's.

" You've posed all day," Pascin said to her. " Do you have to model that sweater now at the café? "

" It pleases me," she said.

" You look like a Javanese toy," he said.

" Not the eyes," she said. " It's more complicated than that."

" You look like a poor perverted little poupée."

" Perhaps," she said. " But alive. That's more than you."

" We'll see about that."

" Good," she said. " I like proofs."

" You didn't have any today? "

" Oh that," she said and turned to catch the last evening light on her face. " You were just excited about your work. He's in love with canvases," she said to me. " There's always some kind of dirtiness."

" You want me to paint you and pay you and bang you to keep my head clear, and be in love with you too," Pascin said. ' You poor little doll."

" You like me, don't you, monsieur? " she asked me.

" Very much."

" But you're too big," she said sadly.

" Everyone is the same size in bed."

" It's not true," her sister said. "And I'm tired of this talk."

" Look," Pascin said. " If you think I'm in love with canvases, I'll paint you tomorrow in water colours."

" When do we eat? " her sister asked. "And where? "

" Will you eat with us? " the dark girl asked.

" No. I go to eat with my légitime." That was what they said then. Now they say, my régulière.

" You have to go? "

" Have to and want to."

" Go on, then," Pascin said. "And don't fall in love with typewriting paper."

" If I do, I'll write with a pencil."

" Water colours tomorrow," he said. "All right, my children, I will drink another and then we eat where you wish."

" Chez Viking," the dark girl said.

" Me too," her sister urged.

"All right," Pascin agreed. " Good night, jeune homme. Sleep well."

" You too."

" They keep me awake," he said. " I never sleep."

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" Sleep tonight."

"After Chez Les Vikings? " He grinned with his hat on the back of his head. He looked more like a Broadway character of the 'nineties than the lovely painter that he was, and afterwards, when he had hanged himself, I liked to remember him as he was that night at the Dôme. They say the seeds of what we will do are in all of us, but it always seemed to me that in those who make jokes in life the seeds are covered with better soil and with a higher grade of manure.

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SWEETE THEMMES

Against the Brydale day, which is not long:
Sweete Themmes! runne softly, till I end my Song.

EDMUND SPENSER

Meadow-sweets

In the time of wild roses
As up Thames we travelled
Where 'mid water-weeds ravelled
The lily uncloses.

To his old shores the river
A new song was singing,
And young shoots were springing
On old roots for ever . . .

By the bank's sandy hollow
My dipt oar went beating,
And past our bows fleeting
Blue-backed shone the swallow.

High woods, heron-haunted,
Rose, changed, as we rounded
Old hills greenly moulded,
To meadows enchanted;

In cloud of grey weather
The evening o'er darkened.
In the stillness we hearkened;
Our hearts sang together.

LAURENCE BINYON, *Bab-Lock-Hythe*

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Bridge of Sighs

"Do you still like me, Fred?" she said.

"Yes, Jenny."

"Well, you don't register much, do you?" she said.

"Register?"

"Well, no one could call you a Valentino, not for emotion, could they?"

Fred felt that something was expected of him, so he came back into the shadow and kissed her again, clumsily, on the nose, because Jane moved at the critical moment . . .

The river and the night were beautiful, and beauty made her want something, though she could not tell what, and she could not talk about it. The tide was rising again, and one of the first tugs came through Hammersmith Bridge, moving very slowly, for she was before her time. For a moment or two she was end-on to the lovers, both port and starboard lights staring at them together. Then as she turned the bend the red eye grew smaller, and vanished, and the green eye swelled and came on alone. Her silent tail of barges swung round after her into the lake of light above the bridge, where the flowing tide ran like a stream of silver . . .

A. P. Herbert, *The Water Gipsies*

A Green Shade

There is a hill beside the river Thames,
Shady with birch and beech and odorous pine:
And brilliant underfoot with thousand gems
Steeply the thickets to his floods decline.
Straight trees in every place
Their thick tops interlace,
And pendant branches trail their foliage fine
Upon his watery face.

Sometimes an angler comes, and drops his hook
Within its hidden depths, and 'gainst a tree
Leaning his rod, reads in some pleasant book,
Forgetting soon his pride of fishery:
And dreams, or falls asleep,
While curious fishes peep
About his nibbled bait, or scornfully
Dart off and rise and leap.

Robert Bridges, *There is a Hill*

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An omnibus across the bridge
Crawls like a yellow butterfly,
And, here and there, a passer-by
Shows like a little restless midge.
Big barges full of yellow hay
Are moored against the shadowy wharf,
And, like a yellow silken scarf,
The thick fog hangs along the quay.
The yellow leaves begin to fade
And flutter from the Temple elms,
And at my feet the pale green Thames
Lies like a rod of rippled jade.

OSCAR WILDE, *Symphony in Yellow*

Hard Facts?

I have wondered whether Scotland Yard may not be a corruption of Scotland Hard, since hard, as a hard, cobbled spot, was, and in some places remains, a name for a water-side landing-place or jetty. Readers of *The Papers of Boz* will find among them Dickens' description of this kind of hard near Whitehall where the colliers unloaded London's coal in his boyhood. The name of Scotland was attached to this grubby and boisterous haven with its special pub and stores because a palace, once used by Kings of Scotland when visiting London, had stood near by. However that may be, the colliers' hard was overrun when bureaucracy swarmed into and cleaned up the Whitehall area. We are left with Scotland Yard, a name now quite meaningless since the palace was not needed after the Union of the Crowns: it was turned into offices where, incidentally, John Milton had a desk in Cromwell's time. Now there is no hard or yard either. But the embanking of the Thames has given us river-gardens, and the Press has seized on Yard for its convenient brevity to signify the headquarters of the Criminal Investigation Department.

IVOR BROWN, *Words in Season*

Magic by Night

At noon three English dowagers ride
Stiff of neck and dignified,
Margaret, Maud, *and* Mary Blake,
With servile barges in their wake:
But silhouetted at midnight,
Darkly by green and crimson light,
Three Nubian Queens pass down the Thames
Statelily with flashing gems.

GEORGE ROSTREVOR HAMILTON, *Tugs*

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They sat there glaring at each other

MANHOOD

BY JOHN WAIN

SWIFTLY free-wheeling, their breath coming easily, the man and the boy steered their bicycles down the short dip which led them from woodland into open country. Then they looked ahead and saw that the road began to climb.

"Now, Rob," said Mr. Willison, settling his plump haunches firmly on the saddle, "just up that rise and we'll get off and have a good rest."

"Can't we rest now?" the boy asked. "My legs feel all funny. As if they're turning to water."

"Rest at the top," said Mr. Willison firmly. "Remember what I told you? The first thing any athlete has to learn is to break the fatigue barrier."

"I've broken it already. I was feeling tired when we were going along the main road and I—"

"When fatigue sets in, the thing to do is to keep going until it wears off. Then you get your second wind and your second endurance."

"I've already done that."

"Up we go," said Mr. Willison, "and at the top we'll have a good rest." He panted slightly and stood on his pedals, causing his machine to sway from side to side in a laboured manner. Rob, falling silent, pushed doggedly at his pedals. Slowly, the pair wavered up the straight road to the top. Once there, Mr. Willison dismounted with exaggerated steadiness, laid his bicycle carefully on its side, and spread his jacket on the ground before sinking down to rest. Rob slid hastily from the saddle and flung himself full-length on the grass.

"Don't lie there," said his father. "You'll catch cold."

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"I'm all right. I'm warm."

"Come and sit on this. When you're over-heated, that's just when you're prone to—"

"I'm all *right*, Dad. I want to lie here. My back aches."

"Your back needs strengthening, that's why it aches. It's a pity we don't live near a river where you could get some rowing."

The boy did not answer, and Mr. Willison, aware that he was beginning to sound like a nagging, over-anxious parent, allowed himself to be defeated and did not press the suggestion about Rob's coming to sit on his jacket. Instead, he waited a moment and then glanced at his watch.

"Twenty to twelve. We must get going in a minute."

"*What*? I thought we were going to have a rest."

"Well, we're having one, aren't we?" said Mr. Willison reasonably. "I've got my breath back, so surely you must have."

"My back still aches. I want to lie here a bit."

"Sorry," said Mr. Willison, getting up and moving over to his bicycle. "We've got at least twelve miles to do and lunch is at one."

"Dad, why did we have to come so far if we've got to get back for one o'clock? I know, let's find a telephone box and ring up Mum and tell her we—"

"Nothing doing. There's no reason why two fit men shouldn't cycle twelve miles in an hour and ten minutes."

"But we've already done about a million miles."

"We've done about fourteen, by my estimation," said Mr. Willison stiffly. "What's the good of going for a bike ride if you don't cover a bit of distance?"

He picked up his bicycle and stood waiting. Rob, with his hand over his eyes, lay motionless on the grass. His legs looked thin and white among the rich grass.

"Come on, Rob."

The boy showed no sign of having heard. Mr. Willison got on to his bicycle and began to ride slowly away. "Rob," he called over his shoulder, "I'm going."

Rob lay like a sullen corpse by the roadside. He looked horribly like the victim of an accident, unmarked but dead from internal injuries. Mr. Willison cycled fifty yards, then a hundred, then turned in a short, irritable circle and came back to where his son lay.

"Rob, is there something the matter or are you just being awkward?"

The boy removed his hand and looked up into his father's

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face. His eyes were surprisingly mild: there was no fire of rebellion in them.

"I'm tired and my back aches. I can't go on yet."

"Look, Rob," said Mr. Willison gently, "I wasn't going to tell you this, because I meant it to be a surprise, but when you get home you'll find a present waiting for you."

"What kind of present?"

"Something very special I've bought for you. The man's coming this morning to fix it up. That's one reason why I suggested a bike ride this morning. He'll have done it by now."

"What is it?"

"Aha. It's a surprise. Come on, get on your bike and let's go home and see."

Rob sat up, then slowly clambered to his feet. "Isn't there a short cut home?"

"I'm afraid not. It's only twelve miles."

Rob said nothing.

"And a lot of that's downhill," Mr. Willison added brightly. His own legs were tired and his muscles fluttered unpleasantly. In addition, he suddenly realised, he was very thirsty. Rob, still without speaking, picked up his bicycle, and they pedalled away.

"Where is he?" Mrs. Willison asked, coming into the garage

"Gone up to his room," said Mr. Willison. He doubled his fist and gave the punch-ball a thudding blow. "Seems to have fixed it pretty firmly. You gave him the instructions, I suppose."

"What's he doing up in his room? It's lunch-time."

"He said he wanted to rest a bit."

"I hope you're satisfied," said Mrs. Willison. "A lad of thirteen, nearly fourteen years of age, just when he should have a really big appetite, and when the lunch is put on the table he's *resting*—"

"Now look, I know what I'm—"

"Lying down in his room, resting, too tired to eat because you've dragged him up hill and down dale on one of your—"

"We did nothing that couldn't be reasonably expected of a boy of his age."

"How do you know?" Mrs. Willison demanded. "You never did anything of that kind when you were a boy. How do you know what can be reasonably—"

"Now look," said Mr. Willison again. "When I was a boy, it was study, study, study all the time, with the fear of unemployment and insecurity in everybody's mind. I was never even given a bicycle. I never boxed, I never rowed, I never did

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anything to develop my physique. It was just work, work, work, pass this exam, get that certificate. Well, I did it and now I'm qualified and in a secure job. But you know as well as I do that they let me down. Nobody encouraged me to build myself up."

"Well, what does it matter? You're all right—"

"Grace!" Mr. Willison interrupted sharply. "I am not all right and you know it. I am under average height, my chest is flat and I'm—"

"What nonsense. You're taller than I am and I'm—"

"No son of mine is going to grow up with the same wretched physical heritage that I—"

"No, he'll just have heart disease through overtaxing his strength, because you haven't got the common sense to—"

"His heart is one hundred per cent all right. Not three weeks have gone by since the doctor looked at him."

"Well, why does he get so over-tired if he's all right? Why is he lying down now instead of coming to the table, a boy of his age?"

A slender shadow blocked part of the dazzling sun in the doorway. Looking up simultaneously, the Willisons greeted their son.

"Lunch ready, Mum? I'm hungry."

"Ready when you are," Grace Willison beamed. "Just wash your hands and come to the table."

"Look, Rob," said Mr. Willison. "If you hit it with your left hand and then catch it on the rebound with your right, it's excellent ring training." He dealt the punch-ball two amateurish blows. "That's what they call a right cross," he said.

"I think it's fine. I'll have some fun with it," said Rob. He watched mildly as his father peeled off the padded mittens.

"Here, slip these on," said Mr. Willison. "They're just training gloves. They harden your fists. Of course, we can get a pair of proper gloves later. But these are specially for use with the ball."

"Lunch," called Mrs. Willison from the house.

"Take a punch at it," Mr. Willison urged.

"Let's go and eat."

"Go on. One punch before you go in. I haven't seen you hit it yet."

Rob took the gloves, put on the right-hand one, and gave the punch-ball one conscientious blow, aiming at the exact centre. "Now let's go in," he said.

"Lunch!"

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"All right. We're coming . . ."

"Five feet eight, Rob," said Mr. Willison, folding up the wooden ruler. "You're taller than I am. This is a great landmark."

"Only *just* taller."

"But you're growing all the time. Now all you have to do is to start growing outwards as well as upwards. We'll have you in the middle of that scrum. The heaviest forward in the pack."

Rob picked up his shirt and began uncertainly poking his arms into the sleeves.

"When do they pick the team?" Mr. Willison asked. "I should have thought they'd have done it by now."

"They have done it," said Rob. He bent down to pick up his socks from under a chair.

"They have? And you—"

"I wasn't selected," said the boy, looking intently at the socks as if trying to detect minute differences in colour and weave.

Mr. Willison opened his mouth, closed it again, and stood for a moment looking out of the window. Then he gently laid his hand on his son's shoulder. "Bad luck," he said quietly.

"I tried hard," said Rob quickly.

"I'm sure you did."

"I played my hardest in the trial games."

"It's just bad luck," said Mr. Willison. "It could happen to anybody."

There was silence as they both continued with their dressing. A faint smell of frying rose into the air, and they could hear Mrs. Willison laying the table for breakfast.

"That's it, then, for this season," said Mr. Willison, as if to himself.

"I forgot to tell you, though," said Rob. "I was selected for the boxing team."

"You *were*? I didn't know the school had one."

"It's new. Just formed. They had some trials for it at the end of last term. I found my punching was better than most people's because I'd been getting plenty of practice with the ball."

Mr. Willison put out a hand and felt Rob's biceps. "Not bad, not bad at all," he said critically. "But if you're going to be a boxer and represent the school, you'll need more power up there. I tell you what. We'll train together."

"That'll be fun," said Rob. "I'm training at school too."

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"What weight do they put you in?"

"It isn't weight, it's age. Under fifteen. Then when you get over fifteen you get classified into weights."

"Well," said Mr. Willison, tying his tie, "you'll be in a good position for the under-fifteens. You've got six months to play with. And there's no reason why you shouldn't steadily put muscle on all the time. I suppose you'll be entered as a team, for tournaments and things?"

"Yes. There's a big one at the end of next term. I'll be in that."

Confident, joking, they went down to breakfast. "Two eggs for Rob, Mum," said Mr. Willison. "He's in training. He's going to be a heavyweight."

"A heavyweight what?" Mrs. Willison asked, teapot in hand.

"Boxer," Rob smiled.

Grace Willison put down the teapot, her lips compressed, and looked from one to the other. "*Boxing*?" she repeated.

"Boxing," Mr. Willison replied calmly.

"Over my dead body," said Mrs. Willison. "That's one sport I'm definite that he's never going in for."

"Too late. They've picked him for the under-fifteens. He's had trials and everything."

"Is this true, Rob?" she demanded.

"Yes," said the boy, eating rapidly.

"Well, you can just tell them you're dropping it. Baroness Summerskill—"

"To hell with Baroness Summerskill!" her husband shouted. "The first time he gets a chance to do something, the first time he gets picked for a team and given a chance to show what he's made of, and you have to bring up Baroness Summerskill."

"But it injures their brains! All those blows on the front of the skull. I've read about it—"

"Injures their brains!" Mr. Willison snorted. "Has it injured Ingemar Johansson's brain? Why, he's one of the acutest businessmen in the world!"

"Rob," said Mrs. Willison steadily, "when you get to school, go and see the sports master and tell him you're giving up boxing."

"There isn't a sports master. All the masters do bits of it at different times."

"There must be one who's in charge of the boxing. All you have to do is tell him—"

"Are you ready, Rob?" said Mr. Willison. "You'll be late for school if you don't go."

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"I'm in plenty of time, Dad. I haven't finished my breakfast."

"Never mind, push along, old son. You've had your egg and bacon, that's what matters. I want to talk to your mother."

Cramming a piece of dry toast into his mouth, the boy picked up his satchel and wandered from the room. Husband and wife sat back, glaring hot-eyed at each other.

The quarrel began, and continued for many days. In the end it was decided that Rob should continue boxing until he had represented the school at the tournament in March of the following year, and should then give it up.

"Ninety-six, ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine, a hundred," Mr. Willison counted. "Right, that's it. Now go and take your shower and get into bed."

"I don't feel tired, honestly," Rob protested.

"Who's manager here, you or me?" Mr. Willison asked bluffly. "I'm in charge of training and you can't say my methods don't work. Fifteen solid weeks and you start questioning my decisions on the very night of the fight?"

"It just seems silly to go to bed when I'm not—"

"My dear Rob, please trust me. No boxer ever went into a big fight without spending an hour or two in bed, resting, just before going to his dressing-room."

"All right. But I bet none of the others are bothering to do all this."

"That's exactly why you're going to be better than the others. Now go and get your shower before you catch cold. Leave the skipping-rope, I'll put it away."

After Rob had gone, Mr. Willison folded the skipping-rope into a neat ball and packed it away in the case that contained the boy's gloves, silk dressing-gown, lace-up boxing boots, and trunks with the school badge sewn into the correct position on the right leg. There would be no harm in a little skipping, to limber up and conquer his nervousness while waiting to go on. Humming, he snapped down the catches of the small leather case and went into the house.

Mrs. Willison did not lift her eyes from the television set as he entered. "All ready now, Mother," said Mr. Willison. "He's going to rest in bed now, and go along at about six o'clock. I'll go with him and wait till the doors open to be sure of a ringside seat." He sat down on the sofa beside his wife, and tried to put his arm round her. "Come on, love," he said coaxingly. "Don't spoil my big night."

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She turned to him and he was startled to see her eyes brimming with angry tears. "What about my big night?" she asked, her voice harsh. "Fourteen years ago, remember? When he came into the world."

"Well, what about it?" Mr. Willison parried, uneasily aware that the television set was quacking and signalling on the fringe of his attention, turning the scene from clumsy tragedy into clumsier farce.

"Why didn't you tell me then?" she sobbed. "Why did you let me have a son if all you were interested in was having him punched to death by a lot of rough bullet-headed louts who—"

"Take a grip on yourself, Grace. A punch on the nose won't hurt him."

"You're an unnatural father," she keened. "I don't know how you can bear to send him into that ring to be beaten and thumped—Oh, why can't you stop him now? Keep him at home? There's no *law* that compels us to—"

"That's where you're wrong, Grace," said Mr. Willison sternly. "There is a law. The unalterable law of nature that says that the young males of the species indulge in manly trials of strength. Think of all the other lads who are going into the ring tonight. D'you think their mothers are sitting about crying and kicking up a fuss? No—they're proud to have strong, masculine sons who can stand up in the ring and take a few punches."

"Go away, please," said Mrs. Willison, sinking back with closed eyes. "Just go right away and don't come near me until it's all over."

"Grace!"

"Please. Please leave me alone. I can't bear to look at you and I can't bear to hear you."

"You're hysterical," said Mr. Willison bitterly. Rising, he went out into the hall and called up the stairs. "Are you in bed, Rob?"

There was a slight pause and then Rob's voice called faintly, "Could you come up, Dad?"

"Come up? Why? Is something the matter?"

"Could you come up?"

Mr. Willison ran up the stairs. "What is it?" he panted. "D'you want something?"

"I think I've got appendicitis," said Rob. He lay squinting among the pillows, his face suddenly narrow and crafty.

"I don't believe you," said Mr. Willison shortly. "I've supervised your training for fifteen weeks and I know you're as

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fit as a fiddle. You can't possibly have anything wrong with you."

"I've got a terrible pain in my side," said Rob. "Low down on the right-hand side. That's where appendicitis comes, isn't it?"

Mr. Willison sat down on the bed. "Listen, Rob," he said. "Don't do this to me. All I'm asking you to do is go into the ring and have one bout. You've been picked for the school team and everyone's depending on you."

"I'll die if you don't get the doctor," Rob suddenly hissed. "Mum!" he shouted.

Mrs. Willison came bounding up the stairs. "What is it, my pet?"

"My stomach hurts. Low down on the right-hand side."

"Appendicitis!" She whirled to face Mr. Willison. "That's what comes of your foolishness!"

"I don't believe it," said Mr. Willison. He went out of the bedroom and down the stairs. The television was stlil jabbering in the living-room, and for fifteen minutes Mr. Willison forced himself to sit staring at the strident puppets, glistening in metallic light, as they enacted their Lilliputian rituals. Then he went up to the bedroom again. Mrs. Willison was bathing Rob's forehead.

"His temperature's normal," she said.

"Of course his temperature's normal," said Mr. Willison. "He doesn't want to fight, that's all."

"Fetch the doctor," said a voice from under the cold flannel that swathed Rob's face.

"We will, pet, if you don't get better very soon," said Mrs. Willison, darting a murderous glance at her husband.

Mr. Willison slowly went downstairs. For a moment he stood looking at the telephone, then picked it up and dialled the number of the grammar school. No one answered. He replaced the receiver, went to the foot of the stairs and called, "What's the name of the master in charge of this tournament?"

"I don't know," Rob called weakly.

"You told me you'd been training with Mr. Granger," Mr. Willison called. "Would he know anything about it?"

Rob did not answer, so Mr. Willison looked up all the Grangers in the telephone book. There were four in the town, but only one was M.A. "That's him," said Mr. Willison. With lead in his heart and ice in his fingers, he dialled the number.

Mrs. Granger fetched Mr. Granger. Yes, he taught at the school. He was the right man. What could he do for Mr. Willison?

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"It's about tonight's boxing tournament."

"Sorry, what? The line's bad."

"*Tonight's boxing tournament.*"

"Have you got the right person?"

"You teach my son, Rob—we've just agreed on that. Well, it's about the boxing tournament he's supposed to be taking part in tonight."

"Where?"

"Where? At the school, of course. He's representing the under-fifteens."

There was a pause. "I'm not quite sure what mistake you're making, Mr. Willison, but I think you've got hold of the wrong end of at least one stick." A hearty, defensive laugh. "If Rob belongs to a boxing club it's certainly news to me, but in any case it can't be anything to do with the school. We don't go in for boxing."

"Don't go in for it?"

"We don't offer it. It's not in our curriculum."

"Oh," said Mr. Willison. "Oh. Thank you. I must have—well, thank you."

"Not at all. I'm glad to answer any queries. Everything's all right, I trust?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Willison, "yes, thanks. Everything's all right."

He put down the telephone, hesitated, then turned and began slowly to climb the stairs.

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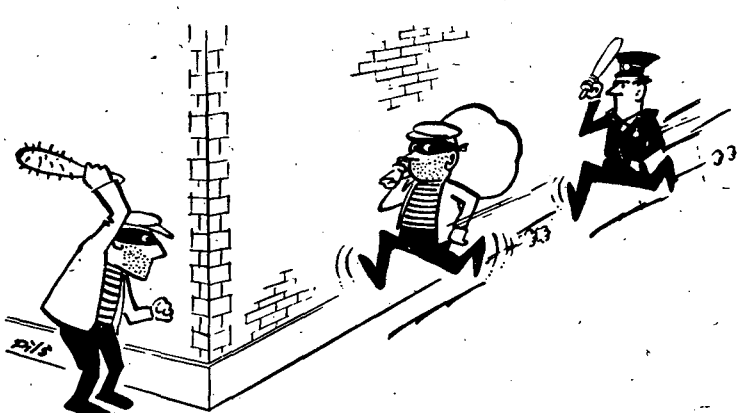

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VARDA, THE FALCON

BY ROBERT MURPHY

To discover a book like The Peregrine Falcon, is to rediscover the magic of the wild. Robert Murphy, writer, photographer, fisherman and falconer, has written a book as unique and beautiful as the falcon Varda, whose story he tells.

Swift, golden, glorious in flight, the most fearless of the brood—she leaves on the long migration south to the Florida Keys. But here, in our extract, we join Varda, her journey only partly completed, hungry and in search of food on the wind-bitten shores of Assateague Island.

VARDA flew almost to the inlet at the north end of the island without catching anything, and landed on top of a telephone pole. She sat there for a while, looking about, but there were no birds moving in the vicinity and presently she jumped off the pole and headed back toward the level again. Near the ferry-landing she swooped at a grackle, which managed to dive into the greenbriars a scant two inches in front of her talons, and continued on.

Soon she had the jeep in view, but it meant no more to her than a caribou, a pony, or a house. She saw the tiercel sitting on the sand and as she came near it the falconer, in the headset, bumped his pigeon from beneath with his fist to make it move and be more attractive to the tiercel. He didn't see Varda; all his attention was on the tiercel. The pigeon flapped its wings several times, and Varda caught the movement.

To her, it seemed to be caught somehow in a clump of grass and an easy quarry. She swung instantly, bore down upon the

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pigeon, and landed upon it. She bit through its neck to kill it, held it firmly through its dying convulsion, shook herself to settle her feathers, and began to plume her quarry. The tiercel, having learnt that Varda would not put up with him, flew off.

The falconer, because of his limited view from the headset and because his attention was on the tiercel, hadn't seen her coming. She appeared immediately in front of him so unexpectedly that he barely managed to suppress a great start that would have frightened her off. For a long moment he gloated over her, unsuspecting and golden, busy with the pigeon; then he slowly brought his free hand up and caught her around the legs. Her eight talons with their vicelike grip were powerless, and he had her high enough so that she couldn't get her head down to bite him.

For a moment Varda didn't know that she was caught. She felt the hand but ignored it; more than once her quarry had closed its feet around her legs as it died. But the grip tightened, and then the man pushed back the headset with his free hand and heaved himself up out of the sand. He was suddenly immediately in front of her, a great creature who had appeared from nowhere and held her tight; she was shocked and powerless. She spread her wings wide and beat them to fly away. Her eyes burnt upon the apparition that had hold of her. The man put his hand on her; he folded her wings and held them with her legs. The feathers on her head and neck stood out, she hissed and tried to bite him. She struggled with all her strength to get at him but could not. When she saw the hood, she bit at it, but it was put over her head and blinded her; then a heavy sock was unrolled down over her body, like a strait-jacket, and thus blinded and bound she was laid on her back on a seat in the jeep.

The appalling suddenness with which her world had changed held her quiet there for a few moments, lost in kaleidoscopic and shocked impressions, but soon she began to recover. In the hood it was darker than any night, the sock pressed in from all sides, and she had never been on her back before. All of these things were intolerable to her spirit and her pride, and filled her not with fear but with rage. She began to fight against them, hissing and rolling about in the sock. She felt the jeep start off and she continued her struggles as it bumped noisily along and bounced her around on the seat.

Back at the old hotel where the falconer was stopping she was handled again. The sock was rolled off her, and leather straps were put on her legs. These jesses each had a slit in the

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free end so that they could be fastened through a double-eyed swivel, and a six-foot leather leash was run through the swivel's other eye. The swivel turned and prevented the leash and jesses from tangling as the hawk moved about. This tackle, which had come down from the earliest days of falconry, was so effective that it had been changed very little in over two thousand years. After the leather was on, Varda was placed on a horizontal perch made from a two-by-four with an old blanket draped over it, and left to sit for a while to compose herself.

She sat in the darkness of the hood, gripping the perch. Being off her back and free of the confining sock she felt better. The hood was tight around her neck and she scratched at it to get it off, but it remained secure. Several times she ruffled her feathers to settle the disarray that the man's hand and the sock had caused, and hearing the noises around her as the men prepared their dinner and ate it, she hissed at them. Violence had been done her; she didn't know where she was or what else threatened; she sat up straight and moved her head to follow the sounds, ready for defiance or defence in the dark.

The sounds went on for a considerable time. When it grew dark her captor lit a candle, got the pigeon that Varda had killed and pulled a wing and a breast off it; he put on his falconer's glove and laid the pigeon breast in it. He walked to the perch, put the gloved hand behind Varda, made a fist, and pressed against the back of her legs. Her balance was disturbed and the glove was alien. She gripped the perch harder and hissed, opening her wings. The glove pressed harder, so that in the end she had to step backwards on it or fall blind into the darkness. The man put the jesses through his fingers, sat down with his back to the wall, struck the hood laces with his teeth and free hand, and slipped the hood off.

Varda could see now. In the dim light, with the flickering candle casting wavering black shadows around the walls, she was in a new and alien world, confined and facing two of the creatures she had learnt to avoid. The wide sky and its safety were gone; the men were staring at her. In her world a stare was a preliminary to attack, and for a moment she was prepared to withstand it; her feathers stood out, her eyes burnt with fury, and she hissed at them. She needed room and freedom, and jumped off the gloved fist to regain them. The jesses jerked at her legs and held her; she was brought up sharply, and hung head down from the hand and futilely beat her wings. A hand came up under her and tossed her back upon the fist again, and she hissed and bit at it and immediately jumped off once more.

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The hand put her back; it continued to put her back, dispassionately and tirelessly, until her breath was gone and she stood panting and hot, with her wings drooped.

She didn't fear the hand; she hated it. It was an offence against her dignity. When it moved she hissed at it and her feathers stood out in menace; when it came near she bit savagely at it. It moved about, it was never still. Once she was quicker than the hand and got her beak into it, and the blood flowed. But the hand came back; it moved the meat in the glove, and she bit into the meat and pulled it out of the glove and cast it from her.

It was put back, and she cast it away once more. It was put back again and again, gently but inexorably, and she cast it away and jumped off the glove and hung ignominiously from it, to be put-back again and again.

This went on for two hours, while the shadows cast by the flickering candle danced wildly around the walls. Varda grew tired; her muscles ached from jumping against the jesses, which always pulled her up with a jarring wrench, and her throat and lungs grew dry from her continuous defiant hissing. She was unbeaten, but she was not stupid. She realised, wearily and at last, that she couldn't get away or prevail and that the man hadn't done her any real harm, and so she quieted. His movements had been calm, not abrupt or threatening, and after his first stare he had been careful to avert his glance from her when he could. Being young, she was more malleable than a haggard, which would have continued to fight. Her spirit wasn't broken; it would never be; she simply had come to the realisation that the thing which had happened to her had to be endured. She was spent and hungry, and the glove held meat. She leaned over quickly and tore at it, and swallowed a piece. She watched the man and hissed warningly at him, but he sat quietly and made no hostile move.

She took another bite, and another. Several times the man rearranged the meat a little so that she could get at it more easily, until she realised that he was helping her and allowed it. When the meat was gone he quietly hooded her and tied her on the perch to sleep. He was well satisfied with her, for she was clever. He had seen many birds which had fought for a week or more and refused to eat except clumsily, with the hood on, but she had quickly realised her condition, accepted it, and made the best of it.

He watched her for a few minutes and as he watched she fell asleep. Her head, heavy with the unaccustomed hood on it,

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dropped down to hang in front of her breast. Perhaps she knew that the first link in the chain of her captivity had been forged and that for a while the wide sky would bear her up no more. Occasionally, threatened in dreams by the haunting shadows of the remembered and disastrous day, she would rouse uneasily and hiss defiance at them and fall asleep again.

★

Varda had awakened early all of her life and watched the light of day strengthen over the world, but the next morning there was no light. She knew the dawn had come, but she couldn't see it. She moved restlessly, stretched one wing and then the other, and scratched at the hood which held her blinded on the perch. Presently the men awoke and the sounds of their moving about began. They ate breakfast and packed up, for now that the falconer had his hawk he was going home. Varda was picked up on the fist again; the perch was moved into the back of the jeep and she was taken out and put upon it and tied down.

The engine of the jeep had started and the jolting, noisy, interminable ride began. She was preoccupied with maintaining her balance as the jeep bounced, slithered, started, and stopped. The ferry crossing was the only good part of the trip, and it was soon over. Once on the mainland the ride was smoother but the noise began again. It built up along her nerves. Presently she could stand it no more, preferring to fall in darkness, and jumped from the perch. The jesses pulled her up and she hung head down, beating her wings against the camping gear.

The jeep stopped and the sock was rolled down over her once more. She made the rest of the trip in it. Several hours later, when noise and motion had ceased, she was taken out of the sock and put on a hawk block in a quiet yard.

Later she was taken on the fist again, the man walked around, became still, and her hood was taken off. Now she was in a different room, which held more light. The man was sitting down and she was very close to him. An English setter lay quietly on the floor.

She had been cut off in a world of darkness and uproar, and stuffed into a sock; she had been confined and bounced about; outraged and surrounded by these new alien things she forgot the night before. She sat very still for a second or two, then she jumped sideways from the man's fist, spreading her wings to fly away. The jesses stopped her with a jerk and she hung head down, beating her wings futilely as before, and as before the hand came up under her back and returned her to the fist.

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As she had hated it before as an affront to her dignity, she hated it now, but despite her overwhelming desire to escape she began to remember how inexorable the hand had been and the futility of trying to escape it. She didn't jump again, but she hissed in defiance, the feathers on her head stood out in menace, and her dark eyes stared down at the man. The setter rolled her eyes up at Varda and her tail thumped several times in good will on the floor, and Varda hissed at her.

The man carried her into the dining-room and sat down at the table to eat, for the constant movement of eating is very helpful in showing a hawk that motion is not hostile. At first every time his hand moved Varda hissed at it; she hissed at everything. Gradually she came to see the uselessness of it and to remember that she had not been harmed the night before, and ceased.

At the end of dinner she was carried into the living-room again. The man sat down and smoked a pipe, holding Varda as he read quietly for an hour. She watched him, ready for defiance but calmer now; she was trying to fathom him. He was a large and potentially dangerous animal but he had not been hostile. He had hold of her but he had made no motion of attack. There was almost a quizzical expression in her eyes as she steadily regarded him. He had even fed her, and presently he fed her once more. This time she ate with less delay, watching him meanwhile. Presently he smoked again, and as the smoke eddied about, it puzzled her and she watched it. It was a new and strange thing, and piqued her curiosity enough so that she removed her attention from him for short periods of time, cocking her head until it was almost upside down to follow the slow, mysterious swirling of the smoke.

In the quiet of the room there was still no hostile motion, and besides there were interesting things to see. She remained wary but could find nothing that actually threatened her, and so made a small beginning towards accepting the man and the dog. Later, when the man stroked her lightly a few times with a pigeon wing-feather as a start towards accustoming her to being touched, she drew her head back and opened her beak slightly in warning but accepted the stroking. She had been touched with feathers in the eyrie, by her brothers, her sister, and her parents; presently she would accept the hand. Close to midnight he hooded her and took her out to the little hawk house beside the garage and tied her on the perch for the night. He left her hooded; bareheaded she would probably jump off at first light and hang by her jesses. Hawk perches have canvas or some similar material hanging from them, so that if a hawk jumps off

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and is pulled up by its jesses it can turn and claw its way back up again. Varda didn't yet know how to do this; she would have to learn, while the man was there to help her, and until she did learn the hood would be kept on her while she was on the perch.

The days went on, and as every action of the man was pointed towards convincing her of his good intentions, she gradually lost her distrust and came to accept him. Her wild defiance disappeared. She was carried for hours and became accustomed to the proximity and actions of the man and the places he took her. She was always fed on the fist; and as trained hawks are controlled by their appetite, and the meat given her was carefully controlled in amount to leave her unsatisfied, she was always hungry and looking forward to the meat-garnished glove.

She who had always fed herself bountifully became a pensioner, and as her manning went on she was made a little hungrier all the time. She lost weight, the roundness of her breast fell away and her keel grew sharp, and her residual fat was used up. What remained of her instinct to avoid man became subordinated to her hunger. She had accepted the proximity of her former enemy; now she had to do even more, and come to him instead of moving away from him as her deepest instinct told her to do. First she was made to step to the fist to be fed, and then to fly increasing distances to it. She was introduced to the lure, a small pillow-shape of leather with meat tied upon it; and when she knew it, she was taken outdoors to be flown to it on a string.

When the lure was thrown, Varda bobbed her head and opened her wings, drawn by hunger and the habit of feeding on the lure, then checked herself. She remembered the many times the jesses had jerked her back. The man dropped his fist a little, and rolled it, and she was in the air. She righted herself and flew towards the lure.

It was the first time she had truly flown since her capture, the first time, unimpeded, that she had had the air under her wings. A great joy went through her. The lure and its meat drew her strongly, but the wide and windy sky, with its freedom and its pleasures, its memories of happy wanderings and wild games with the gales and roaring headlong swoops at living quarry, drew her more strongly still. She came to the lure and made her choice and rose over it, heading upward.

The man carefully tightened his fingers on the string that was tied to her swivel, stopping her and bringing her down. She landed clumsily, with her eyes still on the far horizon, and stood confused. Before she realised that she was still captive

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she tried several more times to jump into the air and fly away, but the string held her. Finally she uttered a creaking protest, low and wistful, and then gave up her attempts and walked over to the lure. She was not hungry enough yet.

★

Between the times that she was carried on the glove, Varda was now put out on a block in the daytime to "weather," as falconers say. At least she was in the sun and the open air once more. There was a leash of leather four feet long on her and she could bathe in a small tub of water, walk around the block, and jump down from it and up on to it again. She had a long view over the countryside, across several fields and a stream, and a rising, wooded hill beyond it. She could watch the winter birds that flitted around in the shrubbery. Few of them would have come so close if they hadn't known she was tied. At first she tried to fly off, but as the leash always pulled her up she soon learnt its limit and stopped jumping against it.

Her food was cut down a little more, and she was flown at the lure daily on the string. At first she tried several more times to rise over the lure and be free, but the string always held her, and so there came to be built up in her mind, between her hunger and the string, a conviction that she was somehow attached to the lure. When this conviction became strong enough and sufficiently impressed to make her reaction practically certain, the man decided that the day had come to fly her free.

This is the day that makes the falconer nervous; he has no certain hold on his bird. Some unexpected thing may happen to frighten her badly enough so that she will forget her training and go off, and all of his hopes and patient hard work will have gone for nothing.

He put bells engraved with his name and address on her so that he could find her if she came down in high grass or underbrush, and picked a day when there was no wind to buoy her up and tempt her to ride upon it. The setter was left in the house, although Varda had long since accepted her. She had also accepted other people, cars, and practically everything that she would see in captivity, but her trainer was taking no chances.

He put her on the block, took the leash and swivel off her, and walked away from her for a hundred feet. He had two falconry bags over his shoulders, one of which held the lure well garnished with meat; the other held a live pigeon on a long string. He stopped and faced her, took the lure out, swung it around his head and threw it from him. Varda was very hungry;

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she had not been fed the night before. She flew directly to the lure and began to eat, and the man breathed a sigh of relief.

The next day she was kept in the air a little longer. The lure was pulled away from her so that she had to circle and return to it. Every day thereafter her flying time was extended a little and her daily ration was increased to strengthen her.

A better time began for her now, for she was flying again. Her muscles were stiff from long inactivity, but all the remembered keen pleasure of flight was hers once more, and as her muscle tone improved with exercise her pleasure increased. When she moved too far away the lure was shown her, to bring her back. Presently, when she was high above him, the man gave a yell and threw out a live pigeon for her. The fierce joy of pursuit, which she hadn't known for so long, awoke in her like a sudden wild flame and she rolled over and swooped; the air roared past her as she plummeted down. She came so fast that the pigeon dodged too late. Her closed foot hit it a stunning blow and it fell, streaming feathers. Varda turned and shot upward until her momentum was gone, and then spiralled swiftly down to grasp it in her foot. She was allowed to eat all of it, to impress upon her the desirability of working with the man.

Another pigeon was thrown out beneath her in a day or so, and she began to watch for them. She kept a sharper eye upon the man. She circled high over his head, waiting, a manœuvre that falconers call *waiting on*. Presently he began to take the setter with him, to train Varda for game hawking. He put a pigeon's head under its wing, held it with both hands, swung it in a circle, and hid it in the grass. The circular swinging confused the pigeon and it lay quietly until the dog found and pointed it and the man flushed it, then Varda made her swoop. From this Varda quickly learnt to keep her eye on both dog and man. When the setter stopped in her hunting and stiffened to a point, Varda, if she had waited on too long and drifted off, would quickly be back overhead again.

She was now taken hunting, carried on the fist until the setter found a pheasant and made a point, and then cast into the air.

Seeing the setter on point, Varda would swiftly ring up until she was high overhead. Once she had her pitch she would hold her circle, expectantly, until the game was flushed. Then she would roll over, give a few rapid wingbeats to increase her speed, and come down like a meteor to strike.

This was the thing that falconers love to see—the impetuous plunge, swift as a falling star, so breath-taking and seemingly so reckless but in reality so perfectly controlled.

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Varda liked to wait on very high for it gave her command of a wider area, and her swoop was a long one, extremely fast; often she would beat her wings most of the way down to increase her speed.

She was kinder than the shotgun, for she never wounded her quarry so that it would go off and die slowly; she either killed it cleanly or missed it altogether and it escaped unscathed into cover.

The falconer had never had a better hawk, and rejoiced in her. She was beautiful to look at, golden, burnished, with a perfect mail of hard feathers and a dignity and presence to go with her appearance; a pleasure to handle, calm and even-tempered, unparalleled in the air among the falcons he had trained. As for Varda, she keenly enjoyed the game. She could have been in worse case. She could have fallen into the hands of someone who would have starved or mistreated her, or let her sit on the block for months, eating her heart out. For a captive, she was fortunate. She had fallen into good hands, but she was still a captive. She was flown and brought down and leashed to her block to watch the little birds in the yard around her go free. The freedom she had been born for, the wide wandering and the limitless sky, had been taken away from her and even in her freest moments she was bound by an invisible cord to the lure.

There came a windy, bright winter morning. Varda, on her block, saw the falconer approaching and she spread her wings; she wanted to fly.

The man's eyes lit up at the sight of her, so eager and golden in the sun. The wind, which had been stronger than he liked all day, had now picked up a little more. It was a wind that a falcon might drift off upon, but he decided to fly her anyhow. He went into the house for his windbreaker and walking-shoes. He put his falconry bags over his shoulders, whistled up the setter, took Varda from her block, and started out.

They were nearly a mile from home, near a small field of corn that had been left standing, when the dog came to a point at the edge of an acre of waist-high brush. The man took Varda's leash and swivel off, and cast her into the air. She went off in a wide circle, rising quickly on the wind, and took a lofty pitch. Almost a thousand feet above him she came into the wind and hung nearly motionless.

On the ground the dog began to show indecision. She broke her point and cast a few feet back and forth. The pheasant had

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moved, and the wind flawed the scent. The falconer ran in but the pheasant wasn't there. It had crept into the cornfield, and the dog found the line and went after it. The man cursed and followed. The pheasant would be difficult to flush, with the falcon hanging over it like Nemesis and the cornfield to run about and hide in. The falconer had a fleeting thought that he should bring Varda down with the lure and move on. The wind was half a gale, but he was so confident of her by now—so sure that she would stay over him, that he didn't do it. Because the cornfield wasn't very large he thought that he and his dog would soon have the pheasant up.

Varda hung motionless for a moment after the setter disappeared, and then swung a little. She could see the man's head and shoulders above the brown cornstalks and watched him a little longer from her widening circle, but the wind tempted her. It had been a long time since she had been able to play upon such a wind. The remembered delight of tumbling about on it, of swooping down and being carried effortlessly and wildly up, awoke in her. She drifted farther off, rolling and free as an autumn leaf on the gale, high above the long hills with their marching companies of bare and wintry trees, the long brown fields, and the green patches of winter wheat.

It was then that a wintering mallard drake, which that morning had pitched into the creek behind the house, decided to move to the river a few miles away. He jumped into the air, and although no man could have seen him at that distance, Varda saw him immediately. He was better to eat than a pigeon and easier to catch, a direct flyer without the capability for quick, evasive shifts, and the pursuit of ducks had been part of her freedom. She went after him at once.

Angling down on the wind from her high pitch, she picked up speed rapidly. Her long wings sang on the air. The drake had a mile start of her, but she drew in on him swiftly. He saw her and put on his best speed, quacking with alarm. The chase was a long one and her wind hadn't been much improved by the comparatively small amount of flying that she had been doing in her captivity, but in sight of the river she caught him and brought him down.

She fed on him fully, having been kept lean and hungry for so long. Then she flew to the river, bathed at the edge of it, and dried herself in the sun. An hour later she flew five miles farther down the river and perched in a tall, pale-mottled sycamore for the night. Varda was free.

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men at play

Play up! play up! and play the game!

HENRY JOHN NEWBOLT

Everyone knows that a bicycle is composed of two wheels . . . the front one of which is designed to run between the legs of absent-minded pedestrians and knock them down. An experienced cyclist can run down from twenty to thirty people a day. After each collision, the rules are that the cyclist must sound his horn . . . a raucous noise to summon the ambulance. There is one good thing about all this. It may help to solve our problem of over-population . . . *Annales, May,* 1891

Raw Deal

"How many cards?" the major asked softly.

"Don't hack at me," Dongin answered. His voice sounded as though he should have blown his nose many years before . . .

"Give me five cards," Dongin blurted.

The major ignored Dongin's request for five cards. "Two for the dealer," he said, throwing his discards with his left hand and dropping two new cards on his stack with his right.

"Them is my cards," Dongin said, making as if to reach for them. The major stopped him with a stare . . .

"You are a cheatin' yeller bastard," Dongin said loudly with his clotted voice.

Three men and a woman at the table directly behind them got up quickly and moved.

Dongin went up, kicking the wooden chair backwards under him, clawing at his gun. The major remained seated. He allowed Dongin the security of getting his gun clear before he moved, then a gun went off in his left hand. Dongin never fired a gun again. RICHARD CONDON, *A Talent for Loving*

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Outdoor v. Outwit

About this time the memorable hero Robin Hood flourished in a romantic manner. Having been unjustly accused by two policemen in Richmond Park, he was condemned to be an outdoor and went and lived with a maid called Marion, and a band of Merrie Men, in Greenwood Forest, near Sherbourne.

Robin Hood was a miraculous shot with the longbow and it is said that he could split a hare at four hundred paces and a Sheriff at eight hundred. He therefore spent his time blowing a horn and shooting at the Sheriff of Nottingham (who was an outwit.) He always used to sound his horn first, particularly when shooting round a corner; this showed his sportsmanship and also enabled him to shoot the Sheriff running . . .

W. C. SELLAR AND R. J. YEATMAN, 1066 *and All That*

Graceless

On the Friday morning when Hitler invaded Poland, I chanced to be in this same Long Room at Lord's watching through windows for the last time for years. Though no spectators were present, a match was being continued; there was no legal way of stopping it. Barrage balloons hung over Lord's. As I watched the ghostly movements of the players outside, a beautifully preserved member of Lord's, spats and rolled umbrella, stood near me inspecting the game. We did not speak of course; we had not been introduced. Suddenly two workmen entered the Long Room in green aprons and carrying a bag. They took down the bust of W. G. Grace, put it into the bag, and departed with it. The noble lord at my side watched their every movement; then he turned to me. "Did you see, sir?" he asked. I told him I had seen. "That means war," he said.

NEVILLE CARDUS, *Autobiography*

Pains and Penalties

To my left the tiger captain watched the struggle of his forwards. "The ball! The ball!" he was shouting. "Leave the man . . . Get the bleeding ball!"

The leather smacked into my outstretched hands. I ran straight at the man. "Go on Art! Go on Art!" Maurice screamed behind me. I ran into him, over him. Trampled him and broke free into a gap. A pain thudded in my head in echo to my feet. An arm gripped my waist, slipped, caught again, and a fist sank into my neck. I carried him along. Then another caught me round the nose and eyes, the fingers explored for pain, forcing me to my knees.

DAVID STOREY, *This Sporting Life*

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Pott-luck

He was generally temperate as to drinking; but one time when he was a student of Lincolne's-Inne, having been merry at the Taverne with his Camerades, late at night, a frolick came into his head, to gett a playsterer's brush and a pott of Inke, and blott out all the Signes between Templebarre and Charing-crosse, which made a strange confusion the next day, and 'twas in Terme time. But it happened that they were discovered, and it cost him and them some moneys. This I had from R. Estcott, Esq., that carried the Inke-pott.

Sir John Denham
JOHN AUBREY, *Aubrey's Brief Lives*

Cutlet Capers

We went over to Cummings' (at Margate) in the evening, and as it was cold, we stayed in and played games; Gowing, as usual, overstepping the mark. He suggested we should play "Cutlets," a game we never heard of. He sat on a chair, and asked Carrie to sit on his lap, an invitation which dear Carrie rightly declined.

After some species of wrangling, *I* sat on Gowing's knees and Carrie sat on the edge of mine. Lupin sat on the edge of Carrie's lap, then Cummings on Lupin's and Mrs. Cummings on her husband's. We looked very ridiculous, and laughed a good deal.

Gowing then said, "Are you a believer in the Great Mogul?" We had to answer all together: "Yes—oh, yes!" (three times.) Gowing said, "So am I," and suddenly got up. The result of this stupid joke was that we all fell on the ground, and poor Carrie banged her head against the corner of the fender.

GEORGE AND WEEDON GROSSMITH, *The Diary of a Nobody*

The Last Laugh

The populace has its amusements and very rude ones, such as throwing dead dogs and cats and mud at passers-by on certain festival days. Another amusement which is very inconvenient to passers-by is football. For this game a leather ball filled with air is used, and is kicked about with the feet. In cold weather you sometimes see a score of rascals in the streets kicking at a ball, and they will break panes of glass, and smash the windows of coaches, and also knock you down without the slightest compunction; on the contrary, they will roar with laughter . . .

CESAR DE SAUSSURE, 1725

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A woman just couldn't say no to him...

TATE HASKELL'S BOAT

BY FREDERICK K. RANDOLPH

AFTERWARDS, Pearl Bascomb knew things would have kept on at a stalemate between her and Tate Haskell if Tate hadn't lost his boat.

Pearl had a cottage on the west bank of the Little Warrior. When her husband had passed away, she had taken her comfortable widow's estate and put it into the property by the river. Pearl's house was painted white with a green roof, and it had three nice rooms and a shed porch in the rear.

For the past two years, Tate Haskell had gotten into the practice of coming to see Pearl two or three times a week.

Tate raised hogs on a dirt farm across the river and up a little bit from Pearl's place. He had about thirty head of Durocs. Tate lived alone. He had a rundown shotgun shack, but he was prosperous enough for a red-clay farmer because he did all his own slaughtering and sold the meat to a butcher over in Mount Olive.

Pearl had often watched Tate from a distance as he worked in his hogyard, and twice she had run into him in Mount Olive. She liked the lean hard look Tate had and she couldn't understand why he had never come calling on her before she had hallooed over the river to him one day and beckoned him.

That evening she waved, however, Tate had gotten right into the little flat-bottomed boat he used for tending his trot-lines and rowed over. The Little Warrior ran deep along that part and it was a long walk around by the bridge in town. The boat was just big enough for one man to ride in, and Tate came rowing over, wearing new overalls and with his hair pasted down.

When Tate sat down to supper, Pearl laid out a plate of fried round steak and potatoes. Then she set in front of him a big platter of her own buttermilk biscuits.

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"Nothing I like better than fried round steak," said Tate, filling his mouth so he could hardly talk.

Pearl was pleased. "It's been an awful long time since I had a man to bake biscuits for," she said.

"This is a fine house you got here, Miss Pearl," said Tate as he was finishing his supper.

Pearl pointed out all the things she had made for the house. "I sewed most everything myself," she said. "The curtains and everything. I'm most proud of this red cover I made for my bundle-bed there. I sewed ruffles all around, see here?"

"You surely don't mean you sewed all that," said Tate. "It does look prettier than the twist in Bessie's tail."

"Who?" said Pearl.

"Bessie. My best brood sow," said Tate.

"I can't imagine how a man living alone like you gets along. Without a woman to take care of the house and things, I mean," said Pearl.

"Oh, my needs ain't much," answered Tate.

"Maybe not, but a man's got to do something with his time besides tend a bunch of hogs," said Pearl.

"Hogs is better company than you might think," said Tate, shoving his chair back from the table.

"Well, now, Tate Haskell—" Pearl tossed her head.

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way, Miss Pearl," Tate stuttered. "Hogs ain't no ways as good company as you. But they are better than some people. Hogs is honest. Did you ever see a hog eat? And watching a hog sunning itself is sure one way of learning enjoyment."

"You're a clever man, Tate Haskell." Pearl's dark eyes shone warmly and she leaned back in her chair and thrust back her shoulders. "Would you like a glass of wine, Tate?" she asked. "Maybe you'd be more comfortable sitting over there. On the bundle-bed, I mean."

Tate glanced a little nervously at Pearl and then at the bed, but he got up and moved over and sat down on the red loose cover.

Pearl came back from the kitchen with a big jug of purple wine. She filled two glasses. Pearl sipped hers while Tate took a big swallow. Pearl sat down close to Tate, smoothed her dress, and filled the glasses again from the big jug.

She raised her wine. "You're a handsome, strong man, Tate Haskell," she said. "A woman couldn't say no to most anything you wanted."

Tate put down the wine glass and reached for Pearl. She felt his strong arms go around her waist and his big hands pressing

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against her blouse. Pearl started to put her head on Tate's shoulder, but when she got close to him, her nose wrinkled and she pulled back.

Tate looked puzzled. He reached for her again, but she brushed away his hands and stood up.

"Why, Miss Pearl," Tate said, "that's no way to act on a bundle-bed—"

"All at once I don't feel like sitting on the bundle-bed," Pearl said. "It's getting awful late."

"Well, that sure ain't much manners for company," said Tate, a hurt tone in his voice. He got up and took a long pull from the wine jug. "Well, guess I'll say a good night to you, Miss Pearl."

Pearl did her best to smile at him. "You ain't going away upset at me, are you, Tate?"

"No 'm," said Tate, but Pearl could tell he was lying. "And thank you for the round steak."

After he had gone, Pearl wondered if he would be coming back. She wanted him to, but she didn't know how she was ever going to tell him she couldn't sit on the bundle-bed with a man who spent all his time around a bunch of hogs.

The next time or two Pearl hallooed across the river at Tate, he acted like he didn't hear her, but before the week was over, Pearl heard him shouting and waving just like before. She waved back and then went into the house and put the round steak and potatoes on the stove.

Tate came rowing across in the little flat-bottomed boat. "Warm evening for this time of year," he said as he sat down at the table.

After eating up all the steak and biscuits, he tried to get Pearl down on the bundle-bed again. Pearl tried hard to sit with him, but she couldn't stand it any better than the first time.

In the weeks that followed, Pearl didn't see how they would ever get over the stalemate. Tate kept coming over for supper. He fell into the practice of coming to see her two or three times a week. Pearl tried her best to sit with him, but she couldn't and she didn't know if she ever could.

As far as Pearl was able to see, things would have gone on that way for ever if the river hadn't come up one morning after a spring flood and taken out Tate's flat-bottomed boat.

Early the next morning after the freshet, Pearl found Tate's little boat tangled up in the willow trees along the bank at the south end of her property. The current had carried it across the river and into the willows. She towed it up against the bank and

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wrapped its tie-line around a branch that hung low over the water.

All day Pearl worried about how Tate was going to get across the river. It was Friday, one of Tate's usual days to come visiting, but she didn't know how he would make it unless he walked all the way around by the bridge at Mount Olive.

She waited as late as she could before starting to put things on the stove, but still Tate didn't show up. About dusk she went out back to see if she could see any sign of him.

Tate was standing on the bank. He had just come out of the water, and he must have swum across the river because he had all his clothes wadded up in his hand. He didn't see Pearl until it was too late, and then he stood there, flustered, not able to do anything but hold his new overalls wadded up in front of him.

"Why, Tate Haskell," said Pearl. She looked at his white body standing there in the dusk. She saw that Tate was burnt leathery-red up to the muscles on each arm and around his neck and in a sharp triangle down his chest. The rest of his body was milk-white, so white it reminded Pearl of the buttermilk biscuits she had just finished baking.

"Lordy, Miss Pearl, ain't you going to turn your head?" Tate said. Even in the murky light, Pearl could tell his white skin was turning pink.

" Tate Haskell, you are certainly a sight," Pearl giggled.

"Turn round, Miss Pearl, please turn round," Tate pleaded.

"Lordy, Tate," laughed Pearl, "don't take on so. You don't suppose I never seen a man before?"

Tate stood there blinking helplessly. He shrank behind the wad of clothes. Pearl noticed the water dripping off his white skin.

" You come on in the house, Tate Haskell, and let me dry you off," she said.

When Tate didn't budge, she went up and took hold of his hand. Clutching the overalls to his front, Tate sidled after Pearl up the back porch stairs and into the cottage.

" Now stand there and don't you move," said Pearl. " And don't splash any of that river water on my red loose cover." She went to the closet and came back with a big rough towel.

" Now hold still," she ordered. She began to rub down Tate's shoulders with the towel. By the time she had dried off Tate's back, she suddenly noticed the clean, manly smell Tate had after swimming in the river. She began to rub harder with the towel . . .

" Sometimes cold round steak tastes even better than hot," said Tate a while later. When he had cleaned up the steak and the platter of biscuits, he stood up, wiped his mouth on his sleeve, walked around the table, and gave Pearl a loud, smacking kiss.

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" Well, good night to you, Miss Pearl," he said. Pearl followed him out the back door and down to the river bank.

She watched while he slipped out of his overalls and got ready to dive into the dark water. " Doggone that boat," he said. " Don't know when I'll get around to building another one. Guess now when I come to your house for round steak, I'll have to come swimming."

Tate's white skin reminded Pearl of the clean smell of his body. She nodded. "Yes, Tate, honey, you come swimming."

When Tate had swum with long powerful strokes into the darkness of the river, she turned and went back into the house.

In a few moments she came out again, carrying her little wood hatchet in her hand. She walked to the south end of her property and pushed into the clump of willows along the bank. She pushed in deep until she found the rope wound around the low willow branch. Leaning down, she swung the hatchet until the rope parted and the little flat-bottomed boat backed away from the bank. She watched as it moved slowly out into the river, and then as the current seized it and carried it off downstream into the darkness.

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Augustus and his faithful hound

" Oh good! Still another half hour to go."

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THE MAN WHO HATED BANKS PART 1

BY MICHAEL GILBERT

THE drill screamed as it bit into the tough metal. The operator, a small man with a sad monkey-face, hummed to himself as he worked. It was the last of eight holes which he was boring, four on either side of the hinge of the strong-room door.

When he had finished the drilling, and had checked, with a thermometer, that the surrounding metal had returned to a safe temperature, he filled each of the holes with Polar Ammon gelatine dynamite, tamping the putty-like stuff delicately home with the blunt end of a pencil; then using the sharp end to bore a hole in the middle deep enough to take the tube of the copper electric detonator with its plastic-covered lead of tinned iron.

When all the detonators were in, he collected the eight ends, bared them, twisted them together, and covered the joint with insulating tape. Then he collected a pile of old army blankets and helped now by a second man, draped them from wires which had already been fixed across the door.

Both men retreated to the guard-door at the entrance of the strong-room lobby. Two of the bars had been cut out. They squeezed through the gaps, dragging the plastic-covered lead behind them.

In the farthest corner of the outer lobby stood an ordinary six-volt car battery. The first man separated the lead wires and twisted one of them round the negative terminal. Both men squatted down, backs against the wall, heads bent forward.

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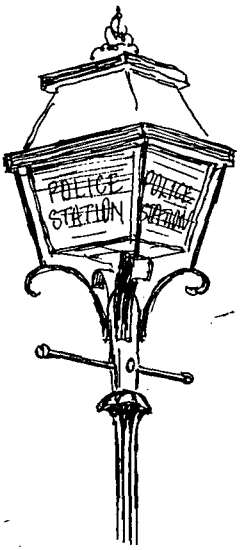

Then the second wire, carefully held in a rubber-gloved hand, was laid on the positive terminal. The shock-wave of the explosion pinned them against the wall.

The third man, standing in the doorway of a shop outside, heard the crump of the explosion and swore softly to himself. The next ten minutes were going to be the most difficult.

A newsagent, sleeping four houses away on the opposite side of the street, sat up in bed, and said, "Cor, what was that? Have they declared war?" His wife said "Wassup?" "Sounded like a bomb." "So what?" said his wife. "It hasn't hit us." She dragged him down into bed again.

Eight minutes. Nine minutes. Ten minutes. Eleven minutes. *What the hell are they playing at?* Twelve minutes.

The door of the shop opened and two men appeared. Both had heavy satchels slung over their shoulders. One carried the drill, another had the electric cutter which had been used to saw through the bars. The third man relieved them of drill and cutter and set off at a brisk pace up the street to where the car was parked. Not a word had been spoken from first to last.

Police Constable Owens, of the Gravesend Police, saw the car nosing into the street. He thought it odd that it should have no lights on, and held up a hand to stop it.

The car accelerated. Owens jumped, slipped, and fell into the gutter. He picked himself up in time to see the car corner and disappear.

Police Constable Owens limped to the nearest Police Box.

A pigeon took off from Boadicea's helmet and went into a power dive. It was aimed at the head of a young man with a brown face and black hair, who had just crossed Westminster Bridge. Detective Inspector Patrick Petrella raised his arm. The pigeon executed a side-slip and vol-planed off up into a tree. Petrella regarded the pigeon without malice. It was a beautiful day. It was spring. He was starting a new job.

The message which had reached him at Gabriel Street Police Station had not been explicit, but he guessed that his spell of

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duty in South London was over. It had spanned three years; and he had enjoyed most of it, but three years in one place was enough.

He pushed his hat a little farther back on his head, and swung in under the Archway and up the three shallow steps into the main building of New Scotland Yard.

The private secretary, a serious young man in horn-rimmed glasses, inspected him as he came into the ante-room, and then said, "The A-C's ready for you. Will you go in?" Petrella found himself straightening his shoulders as he marched by the inner door into the presence of Sir Wilfred Romer, Assistant-Commissioner in charge of the Criminal Investigation Branch of the Metropolitan Police, and—in Petrella's humble opinion—the greatest thief-catcher since Wensley.

"Sit down," said Romer. "You know Superintendent Baldwin, I think."

Petrella nodded to Superintendent Baldwin, big, red-faced, conscientiously ferocious, known to everyone from the newest recruit upwards as Baldy.

Romer said, "I'm forming a new department. It'll be known as C 12. And, broadly speaking—" here his face split in a wintry smile—"you're the Department."

Petrella managed to smile back.

"You'll have two or three people to help you, but the smaller you keep it, the happier I'll be. First, because we haven't got many spare hands—secondly, because smallness means secrecy. Your first job will be the collection and analysis of information."

As Romer spoke, an alphabetical index of subjects, from Abortion to Zionism upon which this remarkable man might be seeking information, flipped across Petrella's aroused imagination.

"On bank robberies," concluded Romer.

"Yes, sir," said Petrella. "Bank robbery."

"Not bank robbery—in general. It's a particular series of bank robberies that's getting under our skin. Never mind the details now. You'll get those from Baldwin. What I wanted to tell you was this. There's one thing we're quite certain of: there's an organiser. I want him put away. That's your second job."

Back in his own office, Baldwin filled in a few details.

"The bumph's in these folders," he said. "It'll take you a day or two to wade through it all. It goes back about seven years. We didn't know that there was any link up, not at first. The actual jobs are done by different outfits. All pro stuff. Chick Selling and his crowd have been involved. And Walter Hudd. And the Band brothers. We're fairly certain it was them who

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did the Central Bank at Gravesend last month. You probably read about it."

Petrella nodded. He had heard enough about high-class safe-breakers to know that they left their signatures on their jobs as surely as great artists in other walks of life. He said, "What makes you so certain there's a link-up?"

"Three things." Baldwin ticked them off on the fingers of his big red hand. "First, they're getting absolutely accurate information. They've never taken a bank that wasn't stuffed with notes. And that isn't as common as you might think. You could open a lot of strong-rooms and find nothing in them but Georgian silver and deed boxes. Second, the technique's the same. They always work from another building. Sometimes next door. Sometimes as much as three or four houses away . . . that means slicing through a lot of brickwork. They've got proper tools for that too, and they use them properly. Someone's taught 'em. And last, but not least, someone's supplying them with equipment. It's good stuff. So good, it can't even be bought in this country for a legitimate job. When Walter Hudd's boys cracked the Sheffield District Bank they had to cut and run, and they left behind a high-speed film-cooled steel cutter that the London Salvage Corps have been asking for ever since they heard about it. It comes from Germany."

Later, installed in a small room on the top storey of the Annexe into which four desks had somehow been inserted, Petrella repeated much of this to his two aides; the first was Detective Sergeant Edwards, a solemn young man with the appearance and diction of a chartered accountant, who was reputed to be extremely efficient in the organisation of paper work. The second—as Petrella was delighted to note—was none other than his old protegé, Detective Wilmot, from Highside.

"Who's the fourth?" said Petrella.

"We're getting a female clerical assistant," said Wilmot. "I asked at the Pool who it was going to be but no one seemed to know. I don't mind betting though, as we're the youngest department, we shall get the oldest and ugliest secretary. Someone like Mrs. Proctor, who's got buck teeth and something her best friends have got tired of telling her about. What do we do next?"

Petrella said, "No one really knows. We shall have to make most of it up as we go along. We've got to have the best possible liaison with the C.R.O. and the Information Room here both on the old jobs, and any new jobs that come along. Then we'll

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have to circularise all provincial Police Forces, asking for information on suspicious circumstances . . ."

"Such as?" asked Edwards.

"First thing, we might see if we can get the banks to improve the reward system. At present, you only collect the cash if your information leads to someone being arrested. That's not good enough. What happens at the moment is, someone hears a bang in the night . . . Might be something, might not. They go back to sleep again. If there was a reward—it needn't be a big one—say, a hundred pounds for the first man getting on the blower to the police station, we might get some action.

"Next, we'll have to circularise local forces: for information about thefts of explosives; losses of strong-room keys; unexplained caches of notes; suspicious behaviour near banks; bank employees with expensive tastes—"

"Bank managers with expensive mistresses."

"That'll be enough from you, Wilmot. Do you think you can draft us a circular?"

"Can do," said Edwards.

"The three of us will have to be on the priority warning list through the Information Room here, and the police station nearest our home. We may be called out any hour of the day or night."

"I'll have to warn all my girl friends," said Wilmot.

That afternoon Petrella was sitting alone at his desk staring at the tips of his shoes, when the door opened, a girl looked in, and said, "Are you C 12?"

"That's right," said Petrella.

"You certainly took some finding. Nobody seemed to have heard of you."

"We're a very important department. But very hush-hush."

"They haven't given you much of a room. My name's Orfrey, by the way."

"I can't help feeling," said Petrella, "that, as we shall be working together for an indefinite period in a space measuring not more than twelve feet by ten, I shall find myself addressing you, sooner or later, by your Christian name."

Miss Orfrey smiled. Petrella noticed that when she smiled, she smiled with the whole of her face, crinkling up her eyes, parting her lips, and showing small, even white teeth.

"The name's Jane," she said . . .

About a week later, Jane Orfrey said to Wilmot, "Is he always as serious as this?"

"He's got a lot on his mind," said Wilmot.

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"He might smile sometimes."

"It's make or break, really," said Wilmot. "If we sort out this lot, he gets the credit. If we don't, he gets a great big black mark."

"It doesn't seem to be worrying you."

"Paper work doesn't mean a lot to me. I'm what you might call a man of action. What about coming to the pictures tonight?"

"Thank you," said Jane. "I'm going to take some of this paper home."

"It's a serious matter, sir," said Sergeant Edwards.

"What is?" said Petrella, coming up from the depths of his thoughts on the technical construction of strong-room doors.

"Our allowances."

"What about our allowances?"

"Now that we're working at Scotland Yard and on a special job, we ought to get a Special Service increment and a Central London increment. But the regulations say that where you're entitled to both, you can have the whole of whichever allowance you select, and fifty per cent of the other one. I've been working it out—"

"And I thought you were doing something useful," said Petrella.

Sergeant Edwards looked aggrieved . . .

Two o'clock on a Monday morning, twelve inches away from Petrella's ear, the telephone screamed. He jerked upright, hit his head against the end of the bed, swore, and snatched the receiver off the instrument.

"Job at Slough," said a courteous and offensively wide awake voice. "They've pulled in the men involved: Ronald, Kenneth, and Leslie Band. There'll be a car round for you in three minutes."

Petrella was still trying to fix his front stud when he heard the car draw up.

He finished his dressing sitting beside the driver as they sped along the empty roads towards Slough. The driver didn't seem to be pressing, but Petrella noticed the speedometer needle steady on the seventy mark. At that moment a motor-cycle passed them, and he just had time to recognise Wilmot.

Inspector Lansell, of the Buckinghamshire C.I.D., was waiting for them in his office.

"It was the North Midland Bank," he said. "They cut their way through from the cellar of an empty shop next door. Must have started some time on Saturday afternoon. Took all Saturday night and Sunday over the job. Blew the main strong-room door

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at half past one this morning. A chap living across the street heard it, and telephoned us. We had a patrol car a few streets away, and we got them as they came out."

"Good work," said Petrella. "I'll have a word with them now, if I may."

"They're all yours," said Lansell courteously.

The Band brothers were small, quiet, brown-faced men, all with good records of regular service in the Royal Engineers.

By six o'clock, Petrella had got what he could out of them. It wasn't a lot. They had all been in the hands of the police before. The routine questions had been answered, blocked, or evaded.

Petrella had hardly expected more, and was not depressed. He was particularly interested in two pieces of their equipment; a high-speed, electric drill with an adjustable tungsten-tipped angle bit which had been used to drill a series of holes down either side of the hinge of the strong-room door; and an oxy-acetylene, white flame cutter, coupled with a small pumping device which stepped up the pressure and temperature of the flame.

Both were in ex-works condition. The cutter had initials and a number stamped on the base. It looked like shipyard equipment. There was a department in the Board of Trade which would probably be able to identify it for him.

If it had been imported under licence, it could be traced back to its maker.

He had another reason for feeling pleased. The banks, some of which had jibbed at his automatic alarm-reward system, would probably support it now that it had shown results.

He said to Inspector Lansell, "Any idea where my sergeant is?"

"Haven't seen him," said Lansell. "I'll ask."

But no one in the Station had seen him. Petrella travelled back to London on a train crowded with coughing and sneezing commuters. He remembered the ice patches on the road and a nagging feeling of uneasiness travelled with him.

In the course of that morning he rang Information three times. No accidents to police officers had been reported.

At two o'clock Wilmot arrived, unshaven but quite unrepentant.

"I've got a feeling," he said—before Petrella could open his mouth—"that maybe we're on to something. It was a turn up for the book. I stopped just short of the High Street to ask the way to the station, and I saw these two in an all-night cafay over the way having a cuppa; and I said, Oi, oi, what are *they* doing?"

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"Take a deep breath," said Petrella, "and start again. You saw *who*?"

"Morris Franks and his brother Sammy."

"That pair," said Petrella, with distaste. "What do you imagine they were doing in Slough at three o'clock in the morning?"

"Just exactly what I said to myself. I said, Here's the Band of Brothers robbing a bank—and here's two of the nastiest bits of work that ever come out of Whitechapel sitting in a cafay, two streets away from the scene of the crime, drinking tea. This'll stand looking into. So I parked my bike—I reckoned you could get on for a bit without me—"

"Thank you."

"—and I hung around . . . for hours and hours. They must've got through twelve cups of tea, each. Just before seven o'clock they come out, and took a train back to Paddington. I went with 'em. At Paddington they got on the Metropolitan, got off it at King's Cross, and walked towards the Angel. There were quite a few people about by that time. I don't think they cottoned on to me."

Petrella was prepared to believe that. Wilmot's urchin figure would have melted as effectively into the background of King's Cross and the Angel as any animal into its native jungle.

"They fetched up at a big builder's yard in Arblay Street. Jerrold Light & Co. They walked straight in."

"Do you think they work there?"

"It looked like it. But that wasn't all. I hung round for a bit. Half a dozen others went in. I recognised one of them. It was Stoker. Remember him?"

"Albert Stoker," said Petrella. "Yes. Certainly I remember him. He tried to kick my teeth in when I was up at Highside. He was working with Boot Howton, and the Camden Town boys."

"If they're all like that," said Wilmot, "they're First Division stuff."

"Mr. Jerry Light would bear looking into," said Petrella.

THAT afternoon he paid a visit to Arblay Street. Jerry Light's establishment occupied most of the north side. It was the sort of place that only London could have produced. What was originally an open space between two buildings had been filled, in the passage of time, with a clutter of smaller buildings, miscellaneous huts, sheds, and lean-tos, on top of, or propped up

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against, each other. Such space as remained was stacked, head high, with bricks, tiles, window frames, chimney pots, kitchen sinks, lavatory bowls, doors, pipes, and cisterns. An outside flight of steps lifted itself above the cluster to a door at first-storey level which was labelled, MR. J. LIGHT.

As he watched, this door opened and a man came out. He was a very large man, with a cropped head, a red face, and a closely clipped moustache. A thick neck rose from magnificent shoulders and chest. It was a sergeant-major's figure; the sort of figure which time and inertia would play tricks on, reversing the chest and the stomach as inevitably as sand runs through an hour glass.

But it had not done so yet. Mr. Jerry Light was, he judged, not more than forty-five and his eyes were still sharp, as he stood surveying his kingdom.

Petrella walked quietly away.

Back at Scotland Yard he said to Edwards, " See if Records has got anything on a Mr. Jerry Light. He runs a builder's yard at Islington, and you can find his full name and details through the Business Names Registry. Wilmot, I think it'd be a good idea if you went along and asked for a job."

" Suppose Stoker recognises me? I had a bit of trouble with him myself at Highside, remember? "

" I'm counting on Stoker recognising you," said Petrella. " Then if you're still given the job, it'll prove that Light's honest. If you don't get it, the chances are the outfit's bent."

" Suppose they drop a chimney on me! "

" Then we shall *know* they're dishonest," said Petrella. He had little fear for Wilmot's safety. Wilmot was extremely well equipped to look after himself . . .

Edwards was the first to report.

He said, "Jerrold Abraham Light. He *has* got a record."

" Bank robbery? "

Edwards smiled, and said, " Not robbing a bank. Assaulting a bank manager. In 1951, he was sentenced to twelve months at the Exeter autumn assizes for waylaying and assaulting the manager of the Exeter branch of the District Bank."

" Robbery? "

" Not robbing, sir. Assaulting. They knocked two of his teeth out, kicked in his ribs, and broke an arm."

" They? "

" There was another man with him. Alwyn Corder. He got twelve months too."

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"Why did they do it?"

"No motive was suggested at all. Mr. Justice Arbuthnot, in his summing-up called it, 'a particularly cowardly and senseless assault.'"

Petrella's mind wasn't on Mr. Justice Arbuthnot. He had experienced a very faint almost undetectable tremor of excitement; like a patient angler near whose bait a fish had swum, not seizing it but troubling it by his passage.

"Alwyn Corder," he said. "It's not a common name. I could bear to know what he's doing today."

"If he's had any other convictions, he should be easy to trace," said Edwards. "Incidentally, Light hasn't. That's the only time he's ever stepped out of line."

"It's the only time he's ever been caught," said Petrella.

It was seven o'clock that evening before Wilmot returned. C 12 kept irregular hours. Sergeant Edwards was filing some papers. Jane Orfrey was filing her nails. Petrella was watching Jane Orfrey.

"Hired and fired," said Wilmot.

"What happened?"

"To start with, it all went like love's old sweet song. Mr. Light said I was just the sort of young man he was looking for; clean, healthy and not afraid of work. He explained how he ran his outfit too. He works for big building contractors; say one of them's doing a site clearance job at Southend, and wants extra help: Light sends a gang down. Half a dozen men—a dozen—however many he wants. Light takes a ten per cent cut out of their wages. They reckon it's worth while, because he keeps 'em in regular work."

"What went wrong?"

"What went wrong was, just as I was about to sign on, in comes Stoker."

"What happened?"

"It was a bit of an awkward moment, actually. Stoker went bright pink, and said he'd like a word outside with Mr. Light. So they stepped outside, and shut the door, and I heard 'em yaw-yaw-yawing. Then Mr. Light came back and said, very polite, that he hadn't got a vacancy right now, but he'd let me know if he had one. So I scarpered—keeping my chin on my shoulder, just in case anyone tried to start anything."

"Lucky they didn't."

"I'll say it was lucky," said Wilmot. "Because if they had started anything, they might have spoilt this."

He took his handkerchief out of his side pocket, and unwrapped

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it carefully. Inside was a lump of cobblers' wax. Impressed in the wax was the outline of a key.

"The key was on the inside of the door," said Wilmot. "I got it out while they were talking. Nice impression, isn't it? I know a little man who'll knock it up for us while we wait."

Petrella said, "Are you suggesting we break into this office?"

"That's right. We could get over the side wall. Borrow a ladder. Plenty of them about."

"You realise that we should be breaking practically every rule in the Metropolitan Police Code?"

"That's right."

"And if we're caught, we shall both be sacked."

"That's why I'm not planning to get caught, personally," said Wilmot.

IT was half an hour after midnight when they backed the little van into the passageway behind Light's yard. A veil of drizzling rain had cut down visibility to a few yards.

"Perfect night for crime," said Wilmot. "You hold the ladder. I'll go first. I think I saw some broken bottle on the top of this wall."

Petrella gave him a minute's start, and then followed. Negotiated with care, the ragged cheveux-de-frise presented little obstacle. Petrella let himself down on the other side, and Wilmot's hand grabbed his foot and steered it on to an up-ended cistern.

Five minutes later they were in Jerry Light's office, carefully fastening the blanket, which Wilmot had brought with him, over the only window.

Petrella turned on his lantern torch and put it on the floor.

"Better get cracking," he said. "It looks like a lot of work."

One cupboard contained box files full of bills, invoices, and trade correspondence. Another was devoted to builder's catalogues, price lists, and samples mixed with old telephone and street directories, technical publications, and an astonishing collection of paperbacked novels, mostly pornographic. The desk was full of mixed correspondence and bills. The old-fashioned safe in the corner was locked.

Three hours' hard work convinced Petrella that Mr. Light had a perfectly genuine builder's business.

"There's only one thing here I don't quite understand," he said. "Why should he bother to keep a seven-year-old diary in the top lefthand corner of his desk? Anything you kept close at hand, like that, you'd expect it to be important, wouldn't you?"

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"Probably forgot to throw it away."

"But why keep a seven-year-old one, and throw away the other six?"

Wilmot came across to have a look.

"There's something else odd about it, too," said Petrella. "Do you see?"

Wilmot shone his torch on to the open book and studied it carefully.

"Doesn't seem to mean a lot," he said. "There's something written on each page. Sort of shorthand. Perhaps it's business appointments."

"That's what I thought at first. But would he have business appointments on Saturday and Sunday too?"

"Doesn't seem likely," agreed Wilmot. "What are you going to do?"

"We can't take it away. If it's important, he's bound to miss it. We'll have to photograph it." He produced from his coat pocket a small black box. "We'll prop it up on the desk. Shine your torch on it, and turn each page when I say."

It took them an hour to finish the job, replace the book, and tidy up.

"If there's anything important," said Petrella, "it's in the safe. I'm afraid that's beyond us."

"You never know," said Wilmot. "I found this key on top of that cupboard. It's just the sort of daft place people do hide their safe-keys. See if it fits."

Petrella took the key, inserted it in the lock, and exerted pressure. There was a tiny sensation of prickling in his fingers, and the key turned.

"Nice work," said Wilmot. "Let's see what he keeps in the old strong-box. Hullo! Something wrong?"

Petrella had relocked the safe. Now he walked across and replaced the key on top of the cupboard. He did this without haste, but without loss of time.

"We're getting out of here," he said. "And damned quick. That safe's wired to an alarm. I set it off when I turned the key."

He picked up the torch from the floor, and made a careful tour of the room. There wasn't a great deal to do. But it took time.

"All right," Petrella said at last. "When I turn out the torch, get the blanket down."

"Nick of time," said Wilmot.

They could both hear the car coming . . .

As they locked the office door behind them and went down

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the steps into the yard, headlights swivelled round the corner throwing the main gate into relief. Brakes screamed; a car door slammed; a voice started giving orders.

Wilmot lay across the wall, leant down and pulled Petrella up beside him. There was no time for finesse. Petrella heard the cloth of his trousers rip on the broken glass as he swung his legs across, felt a stinging pain in his thigh, and the warm rush of blood down his leg. Then he was following Wilmot down the ladder. As he reached the ground, Wilmot's hand grabbed his arm.

Footsteps were echoing along the pavement.

Wilmot put his mouth close to Petrella's ear. "They've sent someone round the back," he said. "I'll have to fix him."

Petrella nodded. He felt the blood running into his shoe.

Wilmot crouched, pressed against the wall. The dim form of a man appeared at the mouth of the passage and came on, unsuspecting.

Wilmot straightened up, and hit him, once, from below, at the exact point where trousers and shirt joined.

The man said something which sounded like, "Aaargh," and folded forward on to his knees. As Wilmot and Petrella picked their way past him, he still seemed to be fighting for breath.

"What *are* these?" said Jane Orfrey.

"They're ten-magnification enlargements of micro-film shots of the pages in a seven-year-old desk diary."

"But what do they mean?"

"If I knew that," said Petrella, "I'd know whether I risked my whole professional career last night for something or for nothing. I want you to go through every entry. I expect it's a code. The home-made sort, that's so damned difficult to decipher—where U.J. can mean Uncle Jimmy, Ursula Jeans, *and* the Union Jack. You'll need a lot of patience with it."

Jane said, "We got something useful this morning. Do you remember Mallindales? The hire-purchase house. It was in answer to one of our circulars about marked and series notes."

There were two things, thought Petrella, about Jane Orfrey. The first was that she said *we* quite naturally, identifying herself as a member of the outfit. The other was that she had carried out every job she had been given without once saying, I'm only here to type letters.

He wondered, not for the first time, how they had been lucky enough to get her.

"You're not listening to a word I'm saying."

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"I'm sorry," said Petrella. "We've had a lot of answers in to that particular inquiry."

"Mallindales told us they had a special stamp which they used on all their notes. Remember? The point about it was that it didn't appear to mark the notes at all. But if you held one of them flat, and looked across it in an oblique light, you could see the letters MD."

"I remember now," said Petrella. "They'd paid in a couple of hundred marked notes the day before the Maritime Bank at Liverpool was broken open. They thought we might locate some of them, because the thieves wouldn't realise they were marked."

"We have located one. It turned up yesterday, in the possession of a character called Looey Bell, a small-time thief picked up by the Highside police for illicit collecting."

"And this was part of the money he'd collected?"

"That's right. The only person—he says—who gave him a note, was the local parson."

Petrella considered the matter. A clergyman who gave away pound notes to people who came to the door sounded an unusual sort of character. "He might be worth looking into."

"Wilmot's looking into him now."

"He's cracked," reported Wilmot, when he came back after tea. "He tried to give *me* a pound. He said I looked a very nice young man."

"Who is he?"

"The Reverend Mortleman, Vicar of St. John at Patmos, Crouch End. When I'd convinced him that I was a police officer and not a Good Cause, he spun me a yarn about a party who gave him money to give to the deserving poor. Some old girl, with more money than sense, who knew Mortleman when he was an assistant clergyman at St. Barnabas, Pont Street, I gather. He wouldn't tell me her name."

"That sounds plausible," said Petrella. "A lot of rich people go to St. Barnabas. One of them might be sending him money for his local charities."

"I could probably find out who it was if I made a few inquiries."

Petrella considered the matter. He had to be careful not to disperse the efforts of his small force chasing red herrings. "Let it stop there for the moment," he said. "I'll get the local boys to watch out. If they find any more of these MD notes circulating in those parts, we'll think again."

The next MD note arrived from quite a different source. A waiter at the Homburg-Carleton, going home in the early hours

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of the morning, started by accusing a taxi driver of over-charging him, then assaulted him, and finished up in custody. The station sergeant, checking his belongings before he was put into a cell, found three pound notes in his wallet, all marked with the Mallindales stamp, and brought them round personally to New Scotland Yard.

Petrella said, "Three of them together! That looks more like it. Where did he say he got them from?"

"He said they were his share of that evening's tronc."

"Then they must have come from someone dining at the Homburg. Good work, Sergeant. We'll follow it up."

Jane Orfrey spent the afternoon with the restaurant manager, and came back with a list of three public dinners, five private dinners, and the names of the eighty-four people who had actually booked tables that night.

"It's impossible to identify their guests," she said. "And there were one or two people who came in without booking."

"It's not so bad," said Petrella. "Agreed, we can't do anything about the people who didn't book. But there weren't a lot of those. And why bother about the guests? Guests don't pay the bill. As for the big dinners, it's only the organisers of those who matter. A bit more work, and we can boil this down to quite a short list."

"Suppose we boil it down to twelve names," said the girl. "What do we do then? Go and ask them all if they know any bank robbers?"

Petrella looked at her curiously. "You need a break," he said. "You've been overworking."

Jane said, stiffly, "It's the most interesting job I've ever done. I don't want to fall down on it, that's all."

"When we heard we were going to get a secretary," said Petrella, "I remember Wilmot said—" At this point, he remembered what Wilmot *had* said, and improvised rapidly—"'As we're the youngest department, we're bound to get the worst secretary.' I think we had a bit of luck there. I think we got the best."

"It's nice of you to say so."

"It must have been a slip-up in the typing pool. They'd earmarked someone like Mrs. Proctor for us, and they pulled the wrong card out of the filing cabinet."

"I don't think the typing pool had much say in the matter," said Jane. "I was posted here direct by Uncle Wilfred."

"Uncle Wilfred?"

"The Assistant Commissioner. He's my mother's brother."

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"Good heavens," said Petrella, thinking back quickly over some of Wilmot's strictures on the top brass. "You might have told us sooner."

"You're the only person I have told," said Jane.

Petrella, looking at his watch, was surprised to see that it was nearly half past seven. He was on the point of saying, "Let's go out and get something to eat," when it occurred to him that Jane might think he was asking her out because she was the Assistant Commissioner's niece.

He swallowed the words, and said an abrupt, "Good night."

After he had gone, Jane sat for a whole minute staring at the closed door.

Then she said out loud, "Silly cuckoo. You oughtn't to have told him. Now he's clammed up again."

When Petrella arrived at Scotland Yard on Monday morning, he could almost feel the thunder in the air. He went straight to Chief Superintendent Baldwin's office.

"You got my note?" said Baldwin.

"I didn't get any note," said Petrella, "but I heard the early morning news. It's not too good, is it?"

"It's damned bad," said Baldwin. "Two jobs on the same night. The Manchester one was the biggest haul yet. What was really unfortunate was that the bank knew they were vulnerable—it was one of the pay-off days for the Town Centre Reconstruction—and they'd asked the police to keep a watch."

Petrella said, "Not so hot. How did they get in?"

"It was clever. One thing the police were on the look-out for was empty premises near the bank. There weren't any. Just a block of offices, all let. The people who pulled this job must have planned it six months ago. That was when they took this office, two away from the bank. They cut through the wall, crossed the intervening office after it closed on Saturday, cut through the second wall, broke into the bank itself, and opened the strong-room some time on Sunday night. No one heard them. It isn't a residential area."

"What now?"

"Now," said Baldwin grimly, "the local force, prodded by the banks, are asking us to help and when they say help, they mean something more than research and co-ordination."

"What had they got in mind?"

"Two or three mobile teams of special officers, working on the lines of the murder squad."

Petrella felt cold.

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"That'll be quite an organisation," he said. "I suppose we should be swallowed up in it."

Seeing his face, Baldwin laughed and said, "It may never happen. But it means we've got to get results, quick. How far have you got?"

It was a question Petrella found embarrassing to answer. It seemed pompous to say, We're still analysing information. You can't expect results until the analysis is complete. So he said, "We've one definite line. It may lead somewhere." He explained about Jerry Light.

"Do you think he runs the whole show?"

"I don't think so, no. My guess is that he runs the heavy mob. This organisation has its own Flying Squad. When a job's being done, one or two of them will be on hand to get back the equipment, and collect the organiser's share of the loot."

"If that's so," said Baldwin, "there must be a link between Light and the head man."

"We're working on that angle," said Petrella. He thought it wiser not to say too much about the diary, or the circumstances in which it had come into their possession. "Another way would be to trace the equipment, from the factory. It'd mean going over to West Germany."

"That could be fixed," said Baldwin. "We'd need a few days to make the arrangements. You'd go yourself. Do you talk any German?"

"Enough to get on with, Genug um durchzukommen," said Petrella.

WHEN he got back to his room, he was tackled by Sergeant Edwards, with a worried face.

"You'd hardly think," he said, "that a man with an uncommon name like Alwyn Corder could disappear off the face of the earth, would you?"

So much had happened that it took Petrella a moment to think who Alwyn Corder was. Then he said, "You mean the other man who helped Light assault that bank manager at Exeter?"

"Yes. Corder was one of the Joint Managing Directors in a demolition firm. Light worked for the same firm."

"Managing Director? Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. It's all in the Company Office Records. The other director was a Douglas Marchant. Marchant & Corder started the firm just after the war. It went broke in 1952. I've searched every record we possess—not only the Directories, but

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Electors Registers, Motor Car Licence lists, Passport Office."

"Perhaps he's dead."

"The Register of Deaths at Somerset House was the first place I searched."

"Well," said Petrella. "Perhaps—" and got no further because Wilmot came in like an express train.

"Guess what?" he said. And gave them no time to guess. "A third note's turned up, *and we've got a cross reference.*"

Three heads went up, like three nestlings offered food.

"A jobbing printer in New Cross. Luckily he used the note for a subscription to the local police charity. When they saw the mark, they took it back to him, and he said it was part of a payment he'd had that morning for a job he'd done printing the souvenir menus for a charity dinner—" Wilmot paused with considerable artistry—"at the Homburg-Carleton."

"Good work," said Petrella softly. "Which charity?"

"It's a Society which sends kids to the seaside."

Petrella turned up his list. "That's right," he said. "The S.S.H.U.C. They were having a show that night. Can't be a coincidence."

"Who was the organiser?" said Jane.

"Mrs. Constantia Velden, O.B.E."

"I'm sure I know the name. Doesn't she do a lot of these things? She's almost a professional organiser."

"Out of my line."

"It's in mine," said Jane. "I did a London season."

She departed.

There was a lot of checking and cross-checking to be done, and it was after six before she came back. Sergeant Edwards and Wilmot had gone home. Petrella saw, from the pink patches in her cheeks and the sparkle in her eye, that something had happened.

"I've located your woman organiser," she said. "She lives in a very nice house in St. Johns Wood, with a cook, a chauffeur and three dalmatians. Oozing with money and good works."

"What else?"

"How do you know there's something else?"

"Because you're almost bursting to tell me."

"I've a good mind not to," said Jane. "Well, all right. As a matter of fact, it didn't take very long to find out about Mrs. Velden. And it was a nice day. So I went on up to Crouch End and saw the Reverend Mortleman."

"The devil you did. What in the world did you say?"

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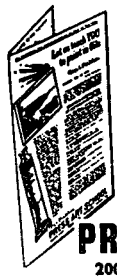

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"I said I was Mrs. Velden's secretary, and she was a bit anxious, because he hadn't acknowledged the last lot of money she'd sent him."

Petrella stared at her.

"He was most upset. Said he was sure he had acknowledged it. He insisted on me coming in, so that he could find a carbon copy of his letter to Mrs. Velden. He did find it too. So I apologised. Then we had tea together."

When Petrella had recovered his breath, he said, "You were taking a bit of a chance, weren't you. Suppose he'd known Mrs. Velden's secretary by sight?"

"He couldn't have known her new one."

"Her new one?"

"She's been advertising in *The Times*. That's what gave me the idea. Couldn't I answer the advertisement?"

Before Petrella could string together some of the many ways of saying no to this outrageous proposal, she hurried on.

"I don't suppose Mrs. Velden's a master-criminal. She certainly doesn't sound like one. But all this money is coming *through* her. She must have some connection with one of the organisers. If I was working for her, and kept my eyes open, I could probably spot—"

Petrella found his voice at last. "You're not even a police-woman," he said. "You're a typist."

It wasn't, perhaps the best way of putting it. Jane turned dark red, and said, "Of all the stupid, stuffy, ungrateful things to say—"

"I'm sorry . . ."

"Don't you *want* to solve this? Don't you *want* to find out who's running it?"

"Now you're being silly."

"At least I'm not being pompous."

Petrella said, "I'm sorry if I sound pompous, but what you don't seem to realise is that I can't possibly let you take an active part in this, without getting into frightful trouble with the Establishment." He added hastily, "It's very late, and we're both a bit tired, I expect. Come and have something to eat with me."

"Thank you," said Jane, "but as a typist, I know my place." She made a dignified exit.

Petrella swore, and took a running kick at the metal wastepaper basket. It rose in a neat parabola and broke a window.

Next morning Petrella made a point of getting to the office early. He found Jane alone there, typing furiously. He selected

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the most propitiatory of half a dozen opening gambits which he had worked out during a sleepless night.

Before he could start, Jane said, "I'm sorry I was stupid last night. Obviously you couldn't do it."

This took the wind out of Petrella's sails so effectively that he could only stare at her.

"As a matter of fact," he said at last, "I had a word with the A.C.—with your uncle, that is—and he said that, compared with some of the things you'd tried to talk him into letting you do, this sounded comparatively harmless."

"Bully for Uncle Wilfred."

"But he laid down certain conditions. First, you're to report, by telephone, to this office every night between five and seven. Use a call box, not a private telephone. Second, if ever you're going out anywhere, you're to let us know where you're going."

"It all seems a bit unnecessary to me," said Jane. "But I'll do it if you insist."

"All that remains now is for you to get the job."

"I rather think I've got it. I went round to see Mrs. Velden last night. It turned out that she knew a friend of a friend of my mother's. We got on like a house on fire." Seeing the look in Petrella's eye, she added hastily, "Of course, if you'd said no, I wouldn't have taken the job. I thought there was no harm in seeing if I could get it. And I'll remember to telephone you."

"It won't be me for the next few nights," said Petrella. "I'm off to Germany."

THE Baron von der Hulde und Oberath propelled a cedarwood cabinet of king-sized cigars across the top of his desk towards Petrella, helped himself to one, lit both of them with a long match, and picked up the photograph again.

"Certainly this is one of our drills," he said. "What can I tell you about it."

"How long has it been in production?"

"Five years. A little more."

"And, in that time, how many would you have exported to England?"

"I should have to consult my records. Perhaps a hundred."

Petrella's heart sank.

"It is a highly efficient drill," said the Baron. "I sent half a dozen the other day to one of your Safe Deposits."

"Safe Deposits?"

"A good Safe Deposit only possesses one key for each of its

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safes. If the depositor loses it, the safe has to be broken open. The screws of the hinges have to be drilled out—but it takes an exceptionally good drill to do it. Any ordinary one would break, or melt. A number of cooling devices had been tried before. None successfully. Then we invented this method. It is so very simple. As the drill gets hotter, it sweats. Just like the human body. It exudes its own lubricant. We call it 'film cooling.'"

"I see," said Petrella. "And no one else but you makes these drills?"

"We have the world patent."

"Then you could compile, from your records, a list of people in England whom you have supplied."

"I could no doubt do so. It might take a couple of days."

"It'll be worth waiting for."

"When the list is ready, I will telephone your hotel. The Goldenes Kreuz, isn't it? Take another cigar with you, please. You can smoke it this evening."

Petrella spent the afternoon exploring Dortmund, mostly from the top of a tram.

It seemed to him an unattractive city. At seven o'clock he got back to his hotel, and had a bath. Then he set out to have a look at the night life.

First, he stood himself a large, and rather heavy meal at the Barberina. Then he moved on to one of the many beer-cellars in the Augusta Platz and ordered a stein of what described itself as the world famous Munchner Low-enbrau; and which tasted no better and no worse than any lager beer he had drunk in an English pub.

On the wall opposite was an advertisement, depicting a man with a monocle smoking a cigar. It looked not unlike a stylised version of the Baron von der Hulde und Oberath. As this thought occurred to him, another one crossed his mind, and he put down his beer slowly.

The Baron had said, "I will telephone your hotel—the Goldenes Kreuz." How did he know which hotel to telephone? Petrella had certainly not told him.

He went back, very carefully, over the events of the morning. He had driven straight from the airport to the headquarters of the City Police, to make his mark with Inspector Laufer, a contact arranged for him by Baldy.

The Inspector had given him the names of the possible manufacturers of drills, of which the Baron had been the largest and the most likely.

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Might the Inspector have telephoned the Baron, to tell him Petrella was coming, and might he have mentioned the name of his hotel?

No. That was impossible. For the simple reason that Petrella had not, at that time, chosen a hotel. He had gone to the Goldenes Kreuz after leaving the police station.

It was at this point that his thoughts became linked with a suspicion which had never been quite out of his mind since he had left the hotel.

He was being followed.

It was impossible to say how he knew, but now that he gave his mind to it, he was quite certain. In London, the discovery would not have worried him. Here, in a foreign country, in a strange city, it was less agreeable.

His first idea was to telephone Inspector Laufer, but he dismissed it as soon as he thought of it. There was no explanation he could make which would not sound ludicrous. Dortmund might not be beautiful, but it was a well-organised modern city, with an efficient police force, and well-lit streets. All he had to do was to walk back to his hotel, go up to his room, bolt the door on the inside, and go to bed.

He paid his bill, recovered his coat and hat, and climbed the steps which led up to the street.

A storm of rain had cleared the air, and emptied the streets. He stepped out, briskly. No one seemed to be taking the least interest in him.

Halfway down the Augusta Platz he had to turn right, into the smaller street which would, in turn, bring him to the Station Square. It was at this moment that he heard the car start off behind him. Something in the note of the engine sounded a warning. He jerked his head round, and saw it coming straight at him.

Without stopping to think, he jerked himself to one side, spotted a narrow sidestreet ahead, and ran down it. It was when he heard the car going into reverse that he realised his mistake. He should have stuck to the main street.

The sidestreet stretched ahead of him, badly-lit, absolutely empty, sloping steeply downhill. Behind him, the headlamps of the car flicked on, pinning him.

He reckoned he had a good twenty yards start. On his left stretched the unbroken wall of a large building; no entrance, not even a recess. The right-hand side was blocked by a high iron railing.

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He put on speed.

There was a T junction at the bottom, and what looked like a rather better-lighted road. He swung round the corner. The car, which had been catching up, cornered behind him.

Petrella sidestepped. His plan was to turn in his tracks, and run in the opposite direction before the car could turn. He had reckoned without the driver. As he sidestepped, the car swerved too. The wing caught him in the small of the back, scooped him up, and tossed him against the fence which bordered the road.

The car screamed to a halt, and went into reverse.

Petrella was lying at the inner edge of the pavement, close to the fence. There was a stabbing pain in his chest, and he seemed to have lost the use of his legs.

He could see the driver now, with his head out of the side window. It was a heavy, white, bad-tempered face.

As he watched, the driver manœuvred the near-side wheels of his car carefully up on to the pavement, judged the distance to where Petrella lay, and started to reverse. © Michael Gilbert 1964

★ ***The last part of The Man Who Hated Banks by Michael Gilbert appears in next month's Argosy***

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD (AUGUST ISSUE)

Across. 1, *Spoonerism.* 6, *Swag.* 10, *In tow.* 11, *Seed-drill.* 12, *Bobbed.* 15, *Cat's-paw.* 18, *Yacht.* 20, *Ice Age.* 21, *Lister.* 23, *Tibia.* 24, *Capone.* 26, *Nullah.* 27, *Sprat.* 30, *Biretta.* 32, *Daphne.* 36, *Lamartine.* 37, *Ulema.* 38, *So-so.* 39, *Shibboleth.*

Down. 1, *Spiv.* 2, *Outdo.* 3, *Nawab.* 4, *Reseda.* 5, *Speech.* 7, *Whippet.* 8, *Galsworthy.* 9, *Adit.* 13, *Beano.* 14, *Eye test.* 16, *Atlanta.* 17, *Discobolus.* 19, *Caber.* 22, *Sylph.* 25, *Pyramus.* 28, *Parish.* 29, *Adverb.* 31, *Tyre.* 33, *Pluto.* 34, *Niece.* 35, *Path.*

SOLUTION TO THE PUZZLE ON PAGE 43

13 December. Cyril is 49 + 12 = 61 days older than Angus. Therefore Cyril was born on 1 December and Angus on 31 January. So Barbara was born on 13 December.

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Leisure-Pleasure

September, and already your evenings are longer and darker. So let's escape into a world of delicious food, wines, absorbing new books, and a world of the practical, fast car.

A most adaptable food—the fowl is eaten in almost every form. Spit-roasted, coming to the table as golden as an Inca's treasure. Boiled, and crowned with a parsley sauce. In a casserole, and more than a whiff of garlic in the fashion of the Basque country. As coq au vin, paté, vol au vent, or in half a dozen sauces of half a dozen nations. For this reason there is a wide variety of wines upon which we draw to complete the table.

Perhaps the best chickens in the world are the maize-fed birds of the Pays de Bresse, and in its main town, Bourg, or in the ancient walled city of Perouges, they serve them with a white burgundy, choosing the best, such as a Chassagne-Montrachet or Mersault. But white flesh to white wine should not be an inflexible rule. At the famous Hotel Oliver at Langon—Madame Oliver's son is the patron of the Grand Vefour in Paris—they will suggest a fine claret with your poulet roti.

Boiled fowl, hot or cold, will carry the flavour of the onions and carrots used in its cooking, and the parsley in the sauce. One can therefore be content with a low-priced wine, such as a sound Spanish Chablis, a Yugoslav Riesling, or a chianti, red or white. If the bird is served cold, a Beaujolais of 1959, served at cellar temperature, is a pleasant combination.

Strong sauces, whether they are Basquaise, paprika, or the indefinable hot one used in genuine Portuguese cooking, should be supported by a full-flavoured wine. It matters not if it is a little on the rough side out of a flagon, and of Franco-Hispanic, or Franco-Chilean origin. Indeed, a Chilean Burgundy like Santa Rita, or a Lindemans Australian Burgundy is a sensible and economical choice. The Greeks drink their light red wines

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with chicken dishes, the Hungarians their Egri Bikaver—sold here as Bullock's Blood: this is its colour, not its flavour!

Coq au vin is, of course, one of the great dishes of the French cuisine, and the obvious choice for it is a fine burgundy, for it is cooked in that wine and is the dish of that region.

A Beaune from Louis Latour or Bouchard Frère et Fils of 1959, or a Ropiteau Frères Pommard of the same year would be perfect.

Maryland Chicken has become internationalised, but it is, after all, an essentially American dish, and should be eaten with a Californian wine such as the Johannesburger Riesling at about 18s. Kettner's of Old Compton Street, London, keep them.

Alternatively, a South African white wine such as La Gratitude would fill the bill.

Vol au vent de volaille is a delicate dish and merits a delicate wine such as a light hock or a Mosel Natur.

An alternative would be an Austrian wine such as the charming estate-bottled Morandehl wines, only recently on the British market at remarkably low prices. Kettner's among others, stock them. Over what to drink with the paté of chicken there can be no dispute—a light, dry rosé, crisp and chilled. Whether it comes from Anjou, the Jura, Provence or Portugal does not matter very much.

OUR MAN IN THE KITCHEN!

It's called Kai in China, Galina in Ecuador, Kotta in Greece, Kylling in Norway, Pollo in Spain, Huhn in Germany, Poulet in France and Chicken in Britain. It's the most popular food in the world, and the most international. Here are some ways in which different nations treat it.

U.S.A.—CHICKEN MARYLAND:

Half a chicken, cut into two portions; 2 ounces butter; an egg; 2 streaky or collar rashers; 2 tablespoons of breadcrumbs; 1 tablespoon of flour; pepper and salt.

Add the pepper and salt to the flour, rub the pieces of chicken with a cut lemon, then brush with the seasoned flour. Beat up the egg and coat the chicken pieces with it, then roll the pieces in the breadcrumbs. Fry the chicken in the butter, *slowly*, turning the pieces at intervals until they are brown all over for about 25 minutes. Meantime grill the rashers. Slice two bananas lengthwise and fry in the same pan as the chicken. Put a grilled rasher on each piece of chicken and garnish with the fried

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bananas. Serve with corn fritters, the mixture for which you prepare in advance.

CORN FRITTERS:

1 small tin sweet corn, cream style; 2 ounces flour; 1 teaspoon of baking power; 1 pinch each sugar and salt; 1 egg.

Mix all the dry ingredients together, then add the sweet corn; add the beaten egg and beat hard together. The batter should be very thick. Stand aside for at least one hour—longer if possible. Then drop the mixture, a tablespoon at a time, into deep hot fat. Cook until the fritters are golden all over, drain them on kitchen paper and sprinkle with salt. Serve hot with the chicken.

FRANCE—POULET A L'ESTRAGON:

1 small roasting chicken and its giblets; 1 large wineglass of dry white wine; 2 sprigs tarragon; 1 dessertspoon of cornflour; 3 ounces butter; salt and pepper.

Cover the giblets with cold water, add salt, pepper, 1 bay leaf and a bouquet of herbs, consisting of thyme, parsley, sage and rosemary, tied in a piece of muslin. Cover, and allow to simmer gently while you are preparing the chicken.

Melt the butter in a heavy pan, put in the chicken and turn it over and over in the hot butter until it is lightly coloured. Then put the lid on the pan and continue to cook gently for about thirty minutes, turning it at intervals so that it is well basted. Put the cooked chicken on to a warm dish, and keep warm while you prepare the sauce.

Using the pan in which the chicken was cooked, add the wine, and stir over a moderate heat, so that the juices in the pan are blended with the wine. Put one sprig of tarragon into the giblet stock, and allow it to infuse while the wine mixture reduces itself by half. Then strain off a quarter of a pint of the stock, which is what you will need for the gravy. Mix the cornflour with a very little cold water, and add to the quarter pint of gravy. Cook, stirring, till it thickens, then pour over the chicken. Blanch the remaining sprig of tarragon in a little boiling water, then chop the leaves coarsely and sprinkle them over the chicken. Serve with boiled new potatoes, sprinkled with parsley. A watercress salad is a good accompaniment.

ITALY—POLLO ALLA CACCIATORA:

1 roasting or frying chicken, about 2 lbs.; 2 tablespoons olive oil; 1 large onion, chopped; 1 clove garlic, minced; No. 1

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size can tomatoes; large wineglassful white wine (or sherry); ¼ lb. mushrooms, sliced; a little chopped parsley; pepper and salt.

Cut the chicken into four pieces, heat the olive oil and brown the chicken in it, turning the pieces over and over until they are evenly coloured—about ten minutes. Add the onion, garlic and tomatoes, then cover pan and simmer for thirty minutes. Add the mushrooms, parsley, wine, seasoning. Cover again and cook for another fifteen minutes. Serve with rice.

BOOKSHELF:

"Tony is tired," murmured Mac sympathetically, settling himself cross-legged in the helmsman's seat as he took over watch at dawn on June 4th, our first full day at sea. "Tony needs a lot of sleep. Poor Tony! Shall we let poor Tony sleep?" Then, raising his voice to the roar of a bucko mate, in a Yankee clipper, "Tony, you lazy bastard! Get up!"

So starts the story of the ocean-going catamaran, the *Rehu Moana*, of her birth and proving, told by her captain and designer Doctor Lewis in *Dreamers of the Day*. What exactly is a catamaran? Doctor Lewis says the name itself is inappropriate, being Indian and merely meaning a raft—more accurate would be the Maori "Mahanga," twins.

One big advantage of these twin-hulled vessels is lightness in proportion to size, strength and wetted surface, as well as a good turn of speed.

Again, because of their lightness it is easier to keep them afloat even if they get filled with water—all points that helped to bring Lewis and his intrepid crew safely through their really rather desperate voyage.

What a crew they were, too, chosen not only for their sea-going experience as for that rarer quality which makes bearable a close-quarters' companion.

Lewis invited one to join him though they'd never met, on the strength of two sentences in a letter: "I have done a little sailing," he wrote, "and in some bad weather I was glad to be alone as my behaviour was not that of a brave man."

This "little sailing" was a single-handed voyage from New Zealand to Denmark, the "bad weather" a hurricane called "Cleo."

So out to sea from its launching sailed the "cat" *Rehu Moana* on its first exacting, dangerous adventure, and the book Doctor Lewis has written about it all makes delightful, breathtaking

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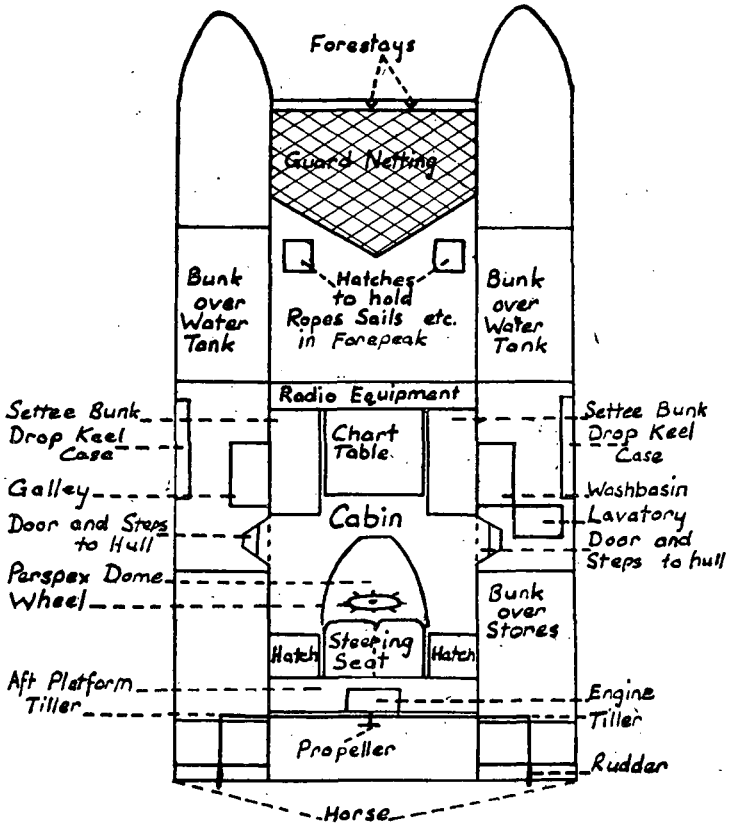
reading for all who love boats and the sea, and many will wish they too could have been with him.

The title? It's a quotation from T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*:

"All men dream: but not all equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes, to make it possible."



Interior plan of *Rehu Moana*.

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The chance to disappear, to start life again—who hasn't turned this thought over in his mind at some time or other? And the hero of *Seconds* with this engaging project in view, had a great advantage over most of us—he was very, very rich! *Seconds* by David Ely comes with a splendid gaudy dust-jacket to match its odd title; with an unsolicited recommendation from Eric Ambler, no mean master of suspense himself, and has been bought by Kirk Douglas who intends to film it.

Anyone wanting to know about—the stage; acting; play-writing and plays; television; Shakespeare; words—would do well to get *What is a Play?*—a witty, informative book, amusingly written by Ivor Brown. But why such poor photographs and such inadequate captions?

WORTH-READING LIST:

Gideon's Vote—the tenth of the J. J. Marric Scotland Yard series and the finest yet. If you don't already know your Gideon, start with this one and then work back!

Nerve—the second of Dick Francis' strong suspense-and-steeplechasing thrillers. Authentic background makes the whole thing come alive.

For those who want something really tough there's *The Drowner* by old-hand John D. MacDonald. A tense, brutal thriller. In typical American idiom, but difficult to put down.

Undercover Cat by The Gordons is altogether lighter-hearted and great fun. Informant X-14 was the F.B.I.'s last desperate hope of catching two killer bank robbers before they murdered the cashier they'd taken with them as hostage.

BOOKS REVIEWED:

David Lewis, *Dreamers of the Day* (Victor Gollancz 25s.)
David Ely, *Seconds* (André Deutsch 16s.)
Ivor Brown, *What is a Play?* (Macdonald 12s. 6d.)
J. J. Marric, *Gideon's Vote* (Hodder & Stoughton 15s.)
Dick Francis, *Nerve* (Michael Joseph 16s.)
John D. MacDonald, *The Drowner* (Robert Hale 12s. 6d.)
The Gordons, *Undercover Cat* (Macdonald 15s.)

Something new for your record collection—*The Pattern of Poetry*. It's a selection of poems dating from the seventeenth century to the present day. Spoken by Alec Clunes, Dulcie Gray, Diane Speakman and Kenneth Ratcliffe, (to mention but a few) this record is just one of thirteen to be issued in this series—but what a feast it is! H.M.V. CLP 172415 (mono only).

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OUR MAN IN MOTORS WRITES:

There is still fun to be had—especially if you happen to own one of the B.M.C. Mini Cooper Ss which come in three engine sizes: 970 c.c., 1,071 c.c. and 1,275 c.c.

I have just spent a few days sampling the middle size and found it was Mini motoring with a difference. It feels and sounds much bigger and tougher—and somehow this feeling permeates the whole car: servo-assisted brakes, disc on the front and Dunlop SP tyres emphasise it once on the road.

The performance is quite electrifying with a maximum speed of 95 m.p.h. and acceleration to match. The brakes need hardly a touch to bring the car from very high speeds indeed to a crawl or a stop.

Cornering is a Mini speciality. In fact, this is a car that almost needs restraint. It simply urges you to drive hard—not that it won't potter in town. The gear lever can be reached easily and it is a nice stubby one, close at hand, where it should always be.

The instrument panel is disappointing for a car with a performance like the "S." There is a temperature gauge and oil-pressure gauge flanking a combined speedometer fuel gauge and mileage recorder. But that highly important rev. counter just isn't there. Instead, there are small markings on the speedometer which are for maximum speeds in the intermediate gears.

Petrol consumption is quite reassuring for the performance, averaging around 30 m.p.g. more or less according to your driving. But it has to be high octane petrol; even then it will pink if the engine is laboured.

Safety belts were fitted in the test car and proved quite easy to use. Unfortunately, when strapped in, it is not at all easy to reach any of the switches and as there is no headlamp flasher, it can be quite dodgy to flash the lamps at high speed.

Despite fairly generous areas of insulating material, the noise level remains quite high at speed and becomes a little tiring on a long run. In the hands of a private owner, much could be done to eliminate this. In fact, I would think that the Mini has more bits and pieces produced for it by the accessory manufacturers than all the other cars put together. But I do wish that B.M.C. would put in a universally-jointed steering column so that one wouldn't have to imitate the Hunchback of Notre Dame in order to drive the darned thing!

If you fancy competition driving, the 970 c.c. "S" will keep you busy in the up to 1,000 c.c. International class and the 1,275 c.c. in the up to 1,300 c.c. class.

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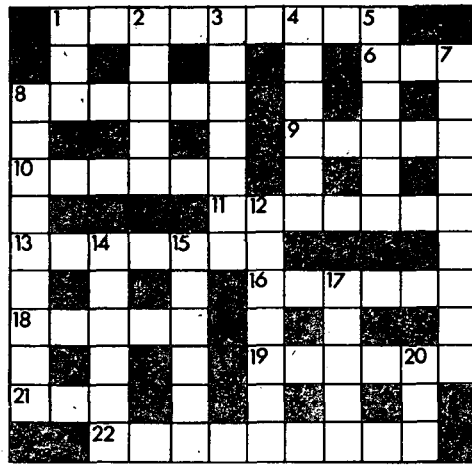
TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Rambling tale (9).
6 Charitable sister? (3).
8 Silvery-white metal (6).
9 Susceptible organ! (5).
10 Pure and unadorned (6).
11 Horsy craftsman (7).
13 Keep under (7).
16 Private place of worship (6).
18 Excuse for absence? (5).
19 Notorious vileness (6).
21 Conquering Asiatic nomad (3).
22 Voyager (9).

DOWN

1 Brazilian port, in short (3).
2 Mirror (5).
3 Dramatic performer (7).
4 Exotic flower (6).
5 Land settlement (6).
7 Of course (9).
8 Nocturnal eater! (9).
12 Attribute (7).
14 Flexible (6).
15 Riddle (6).
17 Worthy of respect (5).
20 Spoil (3).

(Solution on page 26)

WINNER: CROSSWORD COMPETITION No. 4

We are pleased to announce that the following reader has been awarded the "Marlborough" Picnicmaster Set, the prize in our June Competition:

A. Maclean, Esq., Dering Lines, Brecon, Brecknock

SOLUTION TO PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 4 (JUNE)

ACROSS. 1, *Gainsborough.* 8, *Even.* 9, *Billingsgate.* 10, *Look.* 13, *Oran.* 15, *Orated.* 19, *Ken.* 21, *Steppes.* 22, *Emanate.* 23, *Eve.* 24, *Capulet.* 25, *Discord.* 27, *Cat.* 29, *Opes.* 32, *Salads.* 34, *Adam.* 36, *Old Wives' Tale.* 37, *Eggs.* 38, *Starting-post.*

DOWN. 1, *Gibbons.* 2, *Nylon.* 3, *Bingo.* 4, *Risca.* 5, *Usage.* 6, *Heel.* 7, *Pekoe.* 11, *Oklahoma.* 12, *Knee.* 14, *Adespota.* 16, *Rosette.* 17, *Tweeds.* 18, *Dead Sea.* 20, *Apollo.* 24, *Coca.* 26, *Dessert.* 28, *Adage.* 30, *Padua.* 31, *Swift.* 32, *Stern.* 33, *Lit up.* 35, *Moss.*

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ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution next month

ACROSS

1 Dry wine (11).

8 Engine crazy! (4).

9 Ideal for presenting kitchen-sink drama? (5,5).

10 This elephant's a bit long in the tooth ! (6).

12 Stubborn beast ? Not I ! (9).

14 This god's a sore subject ! (4).

16 Not one for keeping customs (4-6).

19 Plant essential to buffaloes? (4).

21 Shot bullets et cetera (4).

22 Suitably treat swelling on bird (10).

25 Promote a grand opera (4).

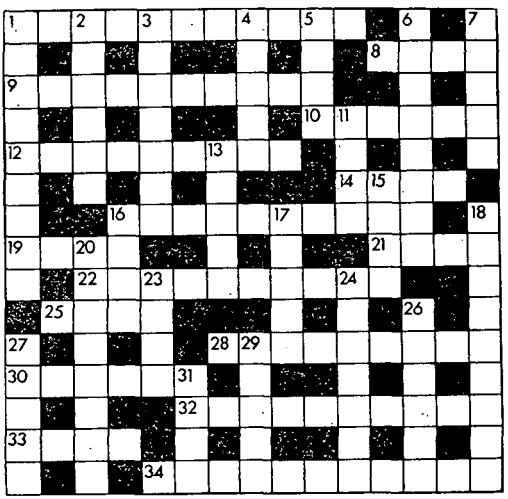
28 Study role without method ! (9).

30 " But —— says he was ambitious" (*Julius Caesar*) (6).

32 Drink with fabulous king in China ? (4,6).

33 Real or noble (4).

34 Was it full when *Sceptre* lost ? (8,3).



DOWN

1 A kind of flowing strength ? (9).

2 She's made a lot of progress ! (6).

3 Tearing about in North Africa (7).

4 "Into the dangerous world I ——" (William Blake) (5).

5 Tied up with special food (4).

6 His 5 is voluminous! (8).

7 Goes round a French city (5).

11 No longer new (4).

13 Tree of Babel exuding gum (5).

15 Harvest pear ? (4).

16 Fief leads to tribal warfare ? (4).

17 Sober as a judge's dress ! (5).

18 Takes more than fools unaware (5-4).

20 Notice of departure (8).

23 Forbidden the natives ? (4).

24 Bad air was thought to cause this fever (7).

26 Rude type ? (6).

27 "His name on the —— stones" (Browning) (5).

29 Mistake made by terrorist ? (5).

31 Tinned pig food ? (4).

Printed in England by PERCY BROTHERS LTD., THE HOTSPUR PRESS, MANCHESTER, 1, and published on the tenth of each month by FLEETWAY PUBLICATIONS LTD., FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4. Subscription Rates: Inland, £2 11s. for 12 months, £1 5s. 6d. for 6 months. Overseas, £2 11s. for 12 months, £1 5s. 6d. for 6 months. Sole Agents: Australasia, Messrs. GORDON & GOTCH LTD.; South Africa, CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY LTD.; Rhodesias and Malawi, Messrs. KINGSTONS LTD. ARGOSY is sold subject to the following conditions, namely, that it shall not, without the written consent of the publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade except at the full retail price as shown on the cover; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition or in any unauthorised cover by way of Trade; or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

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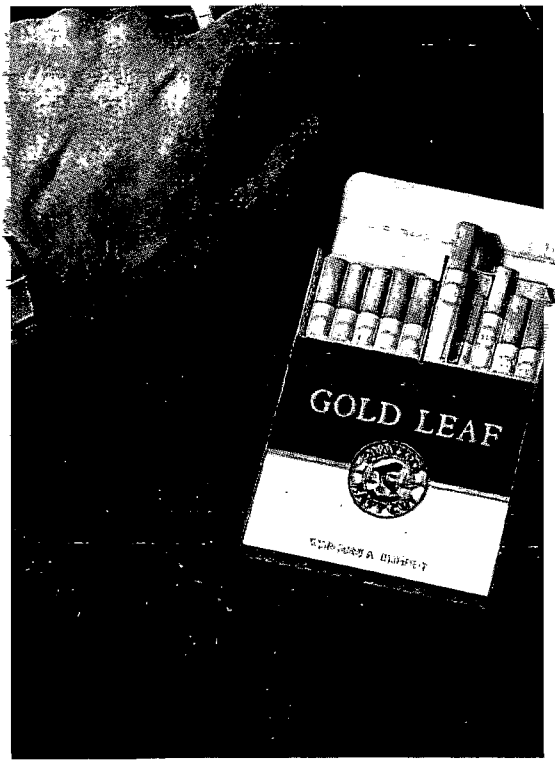

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Player's GOLD LEAF **4/1**
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